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AN EXPRESSION OF INTENSE PAIN AND SET PURPOSE RESTED ON THE WHITE, AGONISED FEATURES.

TWO BROTHERS.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"TAKE your boots off before going upstairs, Mister Dick, like a dear, good young gentleman, and creep as quietly as a mouse by the master's door, or I'll be aither gettin' me wages in the winder to-morrow morning if he finds that I've let ye in against his particular orders. Och I sure, why can't ye be for comin' home in decent time, like your brother, instead of staying out till wau o'clock, getting a poor body into a scrape, because she never could learn to say no to ye!"

The speaker was a stout, good-looking Irish-woman, and her whispered remonstrance was addressed to a tall, slim young fellow in a light suit. The latter's mobile face, fair hair and moustache, and handsome, mirthful grey eyes were dimly revealed by the candle that flared and guttered upon the hall table.

"All right, Molly," he remarked, soothingly, "I'll glide past the governor's door like a ghost: I won't get you into any trouble. It's an awful shame, though, that he won't let me have a latch-key of my own."

"In that case you'd come home with the milk," said Molly, severely. "Get away upstairs now, and if it's a bite or a sup ye're wanting there's a decanter half full of sherry and some saugwitches in the cupboard beside the fireplace. I put 'em therb meself, hours ago."

"Molly, you're a jewel!" exclaimed the late one gratefully, as he went up the staircase, boots in hand.

"Sure and hadn't I ought to be, seeing that I came from the Emerald Isle!" related Molly, with true Irish wit, standing at the foot of the staircase, and holding the candle high above her head to throw a light upon his path, and prevent him from stumbling and raising an alarm at the same time.

Dick Hamilton got on very well till he reached the third story. There Molly's candle and his own good luck alike deserted him. One of the boots he was carrying suddenly slipped from his grasp, and fell upon the landing with a crash and

re-echoed through the quiet house in the stillness of the night.

"Just my luck," he muttered as he stooped to pick up the boot before beating a quick retreat. But the noise had been heard by the very one he wished to avoid disturbing. A bedroom door flew open, and a stern-looking old man suddenly confronted the culprit.

"What is the meaning of this, sir!" he demanded, angrily. "I have told you more than once that I will not allow you to return to my house at such disgraceful hours. You seem to take a delight in disobeying me. One of the servants must have admitted you, since you have no latch-key, and for that act of disobedience on their part I shall take care to have them discharged. You are at liberty to go to your room now. To-morrow morning we must come to an understanding with each other. I cannot and will not tolerate your irregular conduct any longer."

"But, Uncle John——"

"Go to your room, I have nothing more to say to you at present," was the reply, as the owner of the grey dressing-gown re-entered his room and closed the door after him with a bang.

"I've done it now, and no mistake," reflected Dick, when he had reached his own room and devoured several of Molly's "sangwitches."

"I expect there'll be an awful lecture in store for me at breakfast-time. I'll shield poor Molly, at any rate; she shan't lose her place through my clumsiness in dropping that confounded boot. If Walter and Uncle John were not quite so strait-laced in their notions, a fellow wouldn't be driven to adopt such tactics when he has gone in only for a little harmless amusement."

When Dick entered the breakfast-room at nine o'clock his elder brother, Walter Hamilton, who had already breakfasted, was reading the *Times* for the usual ten minutes before going to business. A nod was exchanged between them, and then Dick made a descent upon the ham and eggs, quite aware that some extra tinge of stiffness marked his brother's never very cordial manner towards him.

There was hardly any personal likeness to be traced between the two men. Walter Hamilton was only of average height, with dark hair and eyes, small regular features, and mutton-chop whiskers.

He had the neat, formal good looks that frequently betoken a well-regulated practical nature, somewhat narrow, perhaps, and quite devoid of imagination, or the least yearning for anything out of the beaten track.

From the time when old John Hamilton, the universal provider, whose great warehouses rivalled those of Whiteley and Shoolbred, had adopted his dead brother's sons and sent them to Eton, Walter had always been the good boy and Dick the scapegrace.

Walter, by his persevering blameless conduct and aptitude for study, had won golden opinions from all his masters, while Dick had lived in a chronic state of disgrace and punishment.

Not that he had ever been known to do a mean or a cruel thing; indeed, the weak and the helpless found a protector and a champion in Dick. But his love of mischief had always induced him to take the lead in any wild freak or practical joke that happened to be going, while he accepted the subsequent flogging in proud silence without a groan or a murmur.

Later on Walter Hamilton had become his uncle's right hand in the management of the vast business, in which he already held a share.

Dick, who had not made up his mind as to the profession he should adopt, went in largely for pleasure. His uncle required him to do some office work each day from ten till four, but Dick's desk and stool were frequently without an occupant. His sworn allies, the clerks, were always willing to do his work for him, and prevent him from getting into a scrape with the two principals.

It was not the least annoyance old John Hamilton had to bear in connection with his younger nephew to see him, in spite of his many failings, such a general favourite.

"Going to work already, old man?" said Dick, as Walter rose from his seat and began to draw on his gloves. "What a sober, plodding individual you are! If you don't look out you'll grow old without having known what it is to be young."

"I don't burn the candle at both ends and give myself up to idle and expensive amusements," was the cold retort. "Business first and pleasure afterwards is my motto, Dick. Perhaps it would be as well if you were to adopt it on your own account."

"I couldn't grind as you do if my life depended on it," said Dick, despairingly. "I should have brain fever before the first week was over."

"Don't be alarmed; there can be no effect without a cause," said the other, drily.

"That's a neat way of telling me that I am quite without brains," replied Dick, good-humouredly. "Well, it's only what one might expect from a brother; and since you've got my share as well as your own, you can hardly complain."

"Uncle John is very much annoyed with you for coming home at such unreasonable hours," continued Walter.

Having few failings or temptations of his own he was apt to judge his brother rather harshly.

"Take my advice and be more cautious for the future, or things will go very wrong indeed with you. If you provoke him much more he will throw you over altogether, and I cannot always be interceding for you."

"I think I'll make for the office at once," replied Dick, as the door closed behind his brother; "the old gentleman can't bully me before the other fellows, and I shall escape for the present. I wonder—"

But his wonder was cut short by the entrance of his uncle, who had risen earlier than usual in order to intercept his erring nephew.

"Which servant let you in last night?" the stern iron-grey man inquired briefly, without condescending to notice Dick's "good-morning."

"I don't wish to annoy you, uncle, but at the same time I'd rather not say," replied that young man, firmly. "Since I asked them to sit up for me the fault is really mine, and it would not be fair to punish them for it. If I can't have a latch key I must come home earlier, that's all. I promise you it shall not happen again."

Previous experience having proved to John Hamilton the impossibility of extracting any information from Dick against his will he allowed the subject to drop for the time being.

"Mind that it does not happen again," he said impressively. "Now listen to what I am about to say, nephew Richard, and do as you like afterwards. I have paid your debts and put up with your irregular conduct and confirmed idleness for a long while, but my patience is nearly exhausted. Forbearance beyond a certain point becomes mere weakness."

"I will have no drone bees in my hive, and I have not worked hard for you to spend the money I have amassed in reckless dissipation. You will make up your mind as to the profession you wish to adopt within the next three months, and I will advance the necessary funds."

Meanwhile, if any more bad debts, or any further escapades of yours are brought under my notice, you will leave my house at once never to re-enter it.

"What I say I mean; I never indulge in idle threats. Unless you wish to be cut off with a shilling, and turned out into the world to shift for yourself, you will alter your present course of life and become a respectable member of society."

This speech had an effect even upon Dick's mercurial nature. He was fond of his uncle, too, apart from the wealth the old man possessed, and he had no wish to raise a lasting barrier between them.

"I must try to pull up," he said to himself on his way to the detested office. "It's too bad to worry and vex the governor beyond a certain point, and I can see that he means mischief this time if I get into any more scrapes. For Kitty's sake, I ought to do my best to keep in favour with him, apart from other motives. Poor little Kitty! Our engagement would put the crowning touch to all my offences if Uncle John only knew of it."

Once at the office Dick worked like a slave, to use his own term, till four o'clock; when with the relieved air of one who had done ample penance for past shortcomings, he hailed a passing hansom, and was driven rapidly away in the direction of Grosvenor-square.

"Adelaide will give me some tea after my labours," he thought idly; "and the house in Grosvenor-square is far more cheerful than our palatial residence, which always reminds me of a family vault on a large scale. How Walter and Uncle John contrive to pass so much of their time in it I can't imagine."

The pretty drawing-room into which he was presently ushered contained two occupants—Adelaide Vernon, Walter Hamilton's fiancée, and the elderly lady, a bishop's widow, with whom she resided.

Miss Vernon, a tall handsome girl, with an olive complexion, large sleepy dark eyes, and coils of raven-black hair, fastened by a silver dagger, gave Dick a cordial greeting. There was a certain languid high-bred grace about all her movements that rendered them subtly fascinating. Only the few people who knew her well, however, detected her utter want of con-

sideration for the feelings or the well-being of others, while the refined insolence of look and tone that she frequently assumed went far towards proving that high-bred and good-breeding are not always one and the same.

Walter Hamilton had met her in society previous to the death of her mother, Lady Vernon. Secretly ambitious to marry someone higher in rank than himself he had wooed the stately beautiful girl, and she, in return, had willingly accepted his offer of marriage. If Walter required birth and high-bred in a wife Miss Vernon, whose income was a very small one, ardently longed for a rich husband! Their engagement met with old John Hamilton's cordial approval, and they were to be married as soon as the term of mourning for Adelaide's mother should have expired. In the meantime she had taken up her abode with Mrs. Thorold, the bishop's widow aforesaid, and Dick, glad to escape from the dreariness of the Hamilton ménage, was a frequent visitor.

"Well, bad boy!" she exclaimed playfully, as Dick seated himself beside her, after paying due respect to Mrs. Thorold, "so you are in disgrace again. People who go home at one o'clock in the morning should be careful not to drop boots on the landing."

"Walter has been here already telling tales," said Dick, placatively. "Now I call that horribly mean of him, I hope you defended me in my absence."

"The most eloquent pleader could hardly 'whitewash' such an old offender," was the laughing reply. Adelaide Vernon was not at all sure that she did not like Dick—handsome, debonaire Dick—a great deal better than his staid elder brother. But then Dick was a rolling stone, who would never gather any moss; and, though his erratic goings on amused and interested her, she remained firm in her allegiance to Walter, who bade fair to become a millionaire after his uncle's death. Sally Brass liked poor Dick Swivel much after the same fashion.

"I'd only been spending the evening with some barriers of my acquaintance," he explained. "We went to the Criterion first, and then we adjourned to their chambers for a little supper."

"I expect the supper consisted chiefly of wine and cigars," said Adelaide. A lady visitor was absorbing Mrs. Thorold's attention, and prevented her from being scandalized by the young man's frank revelations.

"Not altogether," continued Dick; "there were both solids and liquids on the table. It was a very cosy little affair, but I had to pay dearly for it this morning. Uncle John informed me, at the close of a long lecture, that any more freaks of mine, coming under the notice of his respectable eyes, will result in his giving me the sack at once. However, I am to decide upon some profession within the next three months."

"If he does anything sufficiently bad to make Mr. Hamilton disinherit him Walter will be the sole heir," was the thought that darted through Adelaide Vernon's mind.

Here was a cold and calculating nature.

"What profession have you fixed upon?" she said aloud.

"I haven't fixed upon any," replied Dick, airily; "tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, I care about as much for one as the other. If I have any preference it is for the travelling tinker's life, since it combines ease and varied experience without entailing much responsibility."

"Unless you ruin someone's kettle in trying to mend it," said Adelaide.

She liked to jest with Dick, but she never gave him any earnest womanly advice, or made any effort to check him in his wild career.

Dick drank his tea and ate his slice of pound cake. Then—feeling ashamed to stay any longer—he took leave of Adelaide Vernon and Mrs. Thorold, and went straight to the club.

He dined there after a modest fashion, looked in at the theatre for an hour later on, and amazed the entire household by reaching home just as the clocks were striking eleven.

"If I go on improving at this rapid rate I shall reach perfection by a short cut," was his

last reflection before falling asleep to dream that he had married Kitty, and that they were trudging round the country on their wedding tour in the respective capacities of a travelling singer and a fortune-teller.

CHAPTER II.

DICK HAMILTON fulfilled his office duties on the following day in a steady, plodding manner that caused the clerks to lay their heads together and wonder what had come to him.

He must be in disgrace with his uncle, they opined, or he would not sit there quill-driving hour after hour when he has never before been known to work save by fits and starts.

When the hand of the dusty-faced office clock pointed to four Dick threw down his pen with a gasp of relief and went away, humming an air from one of Balfe's operas.

He did not charter a hansom this time, but walked quickly on till he came to a poor, but fairly respectable street leading out of the Strand. His loud knock at the door of a somewhat superior-looking house was answered by a plump little woman with whom he seemed to be very well acquainted.

After exchanging a brisk fire of nonsense with her Dick sprang lightly upstairs.

The door of a room on the second floor opened quickly, as if someone had been on the lookout for him, and a small, pretty girl ran out to meet him with an exclamation of delight.

"Daddy, he's come!" she cried, gladly. "I knew he would, and he can stay till it is time for you to go to the theatre. Won't that be delightful! Tes's quite ready, Dick, and I've made such a splendid cake in honour of your arrival."

"Sure it isn't heavy?" said Dick, provokingly, placing his arm round her slim waist and kissing her fondly, as together they entered the little sitting-room, the occupant of which arose from his chair and laid aside his pipe to welcome the visitor.

If the well-worn furniture of the room bespoke the poverty of its inmates there were many signs of good taste and skilful contrivance to be discerned in it.

Cheap engravings of world-renowned pictures hung upon the walls; antimacassars and pretty inexpensive ornaments helped to cover the faded chairs, while books and papers were scattered about in every corner. The table in the centre of the room was spread for tea, and a vase holding wild flowers stood on the damask cloth.

Ernest Lambert, the actor, who with his daughter Kitty rented the second floor apartments in question, was an elderly man with grey hair and a pensive kindly face, that time and trouble alike had helped to furrow.

He had never made much headway in his profession; for, although he did not lack histrionic talent he had none of the push and the self-confidence that help to attract notice and obtain success for their owner.

His fine, sensitive nature had been against him in some respects; and now, in the decline of life, he was glad to take any minor part offered to him by a manager in return for a very modest salary.

Kitty Lambert, the actor's only child, was a girl of seventeen. She had a small, well-developed figure, and brown hair that clustered round her head in short wavy curls, making her look not unlike a pretty boy.

Her great limpid blue eyes, flashing gleams of defiance or tenderness at will, were shaded by long curving lashes, and her somewhat large, but firm and dimpled mouth displayed the pearly teeth within.

Kitty was not an actress. It had been her father's wish that she should not follow his profession, and she had reluctantly renounced her dream of one day becoming a "star" at his request.

She looked after home, and having a penchant for scribbling she filled up her spare time by writing stories and bright little articles that

frequently found acceptance; the money she received for her work helping to swell the Lamberts' scanty income.

A quick-tempered, warm-hearted, lovable girl, inclined to be thoughtless and wilful, Kitty dominated over those she cared most for like some little empress.

Dick Hamilton had fallen in love with her on the occasion of their first meeting, when he had assisted her over a dangerous crossing. After that he had contrived to waylay her from time to time, always treating her with the most chivalrous respect, until Kitty, who was candour personified, made the affair known to her father.

It took Dick some time to convince the old actor his intentions towards Kitty were really honourable and above suspicion; but when he had once succeeded in doing so Ernest Lambert placed no hindrance in the way of the engagement for which the young man pleaded.

He could not find it in his heart to thwart Kitty, or to take the sunshine from her life by depriving her of her lover. It annoyed him to know their engagement must, for the present, remain a secret.

Dick had explained to him the necessity for caution and prudence, if his prejudiced relatives were not to be offended beyond all hope of forgiveness.

But, although the actor had consented to the engagement, a secret marriage was one of the things he steadily refused to permit.

"Did you have a pleasant day in the country yesterday?" inquired Dick, as they took their places at the tea-table after the old-fashioned style. "I thought about you both while I was grinding away in the office, and didn't I wish that I had been able to go with you?"

"Poor fellow!" said Kitty, in a sympathetic tone. "I think your people treat you very badly, Dick. Yes, we had a lovely time, didn't we, daddy? It was so nice to see the fresh green fields, and to pick one's own flowers, instead of buying them done up in tight half-faded bunches. When I am in the country I don't wonder why the poets have so much to say about spring delights."

"Yes, lamb cutlets, green peas, early cucumbers, and that sort of thing," remarked Dick, with a mischievous gleam in his grey eyes. "They all come together at this time of year, and they are delightful, especially the cutlets."

Kitty darted a glance of withering scorn at her matter-of-fact lover.

"The poets were not gourmards," she said, severely, "and you know very well that I was not alluding to such things, Dick. You don't deserve to hear our good news after such a speech, and yet I must tell you, because I can't keep it to myself any longer. Father has got an engagement at the Adelphi, a better one than he has had before for a long while."

"I am very glad to hear it," said Dick, heartily. "You must allow me to congratulate you, sir, upon this piece of good fortune. I'm sure that you really deserve it."

"Well, I don't know about that," replied the actor, with a smile; "but I'm glad to get it, nevertheless, and, since the character is one that I feel at home in, the task of impersonating it will be really a pleasure."

Kitty's father accepted his lowly lot with so much contentment—he was so patient under disappointment, so grateful for any small success that fell to his share—that Dick Hamilton sometimes regarded him with a feeling of respectfulness. Such men when they do leave the world all the richer and the better for their having once lived in it.

"I wonder which rôle would suit me best if I were to take to the stage," Dick remarked, presently. "Kitty, child, can you help me to a profession? I've only three months allowed me in which to make up my mind."

And then he acquainted his listeners with the incident of the supper party, and the "wixing" from his uncle that had followed it. Kitty's pretty face wore rather a grave look at the conclusion, and she did not offer any suggestions.

"Your uncle is quite right in wishing you to make the best use of your time, Mr. Hamilton,"

said the actor, quietly. "The years that come between twenty and thirty, in my opinion, form the best part of a man's life. They are full of fresh, vigorous strength, and if we waste them we cannot retrieve the lost opportunities later on."

"And time is money," put in Kitty, sententiously.

"I wish my tailor would only think so," responded Dick, cheerfully. "I'd get him to take some of my idle hours then in payment of the bill he is always worrying me about. Seriously, though, I am going to please everybody by turning over a new leaf, and looking after my own interests. Now, about the profession. What do you say to the army, Kitty?"

"I think you would look very nice in uniform," said Kitty, musingly. "Oh, how I should like to see you in the Guards! But there is the examination, Dick; that has to come first, you know."

"I should squeeze through somehow, with the help of a first-rate coach," was the confident reply; "and once in the service Uncle John would look upon me as a made man. Walter would be nowhere when Major-General Hamilton appeared upon the scene."

"He's a General already, Kitty," said the actor quaintly, as he rose and put on his coat. "Promotion must be very rapid in the army. Good night, child. Now, Mr. Hamilton, are you ready?"

"Coming, sir," cried Dick, who had lingered behind to bestow a parting kiss upon Kitty, who clung to his arm and whispered softly:

"Try to keep right, dear, for my sake, and don't do anything more to vex your uncle."

"You may trust me; I really am going to reform this time, little woman," was the earnest reply; and then, having watched her lover, and her father go down the street together, Kitty got out her desk, and wrote industriously for the next two hours at a love-story; her own unfinished love-story running through her mind like an undercurrent all the while.

Parting from the actor at the corner of the street Dick went home, little dreaming of the reception in store for him there.

He was quite sincere in his resolve to turn over a new leaf, but sometimes when wild oats have been sown with a liberal hand the harvest springs up unexpectedly, just as we are trying to make some better use of the ground, and such proved to be the case with Dick Hamilton.

Six months before he had been persuaded into buying a horse which the dealer assured him was well worth the large sum demanded for it. Dick, who prided himself on his knowledge of horse-flesh, of which he knew very little, flew into a passion on discovering the shabby bay mare to be faulty from shoulder to fetlock.

The horse-dealer had refused to acknowledge the faults, or to take anything off the original price, and Dick, in consequence, had declined payment.

That very afternoon, directly Dick had left his uncle's office, the man put in an appearance there while under the influence of drink, and demanded to see the principal.

While waiting to be admitted to the inner sanctum where the head of the firm received visitors he aired his grievance to the clerks in no measured language.

Old John Hamilton, stung to the quick by this humiliation and annoyance of Dick's causing, paid the horse-dealer exactly what he asked, without making any protest, and got rid of him as quickly as possible. But his hand trembled as he signed the cheque, for he had never been known to break his word, and in accordance with what he had said only yesterday Dick must now be sent adrift.

Both John Hamilton and his nephew Walter, who, to do him justice, was very sorry for what had occurred, were in the dining-room when Dick got home, awaiting his arrival.

Walter had tried to put in a plea for his brother, but the old merchant had silenced him peremptorily, and he knew that iron will was not lightly to be tampered with.

"What is the matter?" inquired Dick,

glancing from one troubled face to the other, in all amazement.

"Not much, as considered from your point of view," replied his uncle, sarcastically, "since you are in the habit of taking everything lightly. That is your receipted bill, Richard. It is the last that I shall ever have the pleasure of handing to you. You remember what I told you would happen if any more debts of your contracting were brought under my notice? The caution was given only yesterday, and to-day another debt has been flaunted in my face in the most shameless manner. I have paid it, and now you will oblige me by leaving my house as soon as you have packed up your personal belongings, and never dare to re-enter it while I live."

Dick glanced at the paper just handed to him by his uncle, and his face grew deathly pale as he realised the serious nature of the situation.

"Allow me to remind you, sir," he said, quietly, "that the debt in question was contracted previous to the warning I received from you yesterday. It was not a fair debt either, since the horse turned out to be a wretched screw, and it was my intention to contest the dealer's claim."

"It makes no matter when it was contracted," retorted the old man, fiercely. "My words to you were to the effect that you should leave my house a disinherited man if any other debts came to my knowledge, irrespective of time or date. Perhaps your horse-dealing friends will help you to earn a living now that you are thrown upon your own resources. I have done my utmost for you, I have given you a splendid education, I would have helped you to a profession, and well you have rewarded me. Had I thrown the money that I have spent upon you out into the street it could hardly have brought me less pleasure or profit."

A nervous contraction passed over Dick's fair, handsome face as these bitter words fell upon his ear, and his grey eyes wore a troubled expression.

He was too proud to plead for the forgiveness that he knew would not be granted to him, but conscience forced him to recognise the truth contained in his uncle's statement, and he felt reluctant to leave the man who had been to him a second father under such painful auspices.

"Won't you shake hands with me before I go, Uncle John?" he said, rather wistfully. "I know that I have made you a very poor return for all your kindness, and yet, believe me, I am not altogether ungrateful for it, or for what you would have done for me had I behaved differently. I shall never trouble you again, since you have thought proper to disown me, but don't let us part ill friends."

"Go at once; Ferguson will help you with your packing," replied John Hamilton, ignoring Dick's outstretched hand, and turning away from him as he spoke. "I have but one nephew now, and I shall never acknowledge any other. I regard you in the light of a bad, a very bad, investment. As to your gratitude, I can hardly be expected to believe in that, since it has never taken a practical form, and the sooner you are out of my house the better I shall like it."

Without another word Dick turned to depart, and his brother went out after him.

When the door had closed behind them John Hamilton flung himself into a chair and hid his worn face in his hands. He had adhered firmly to his Spartan principles; he had given way to no fond, sentimental weakness, and yet the scapegrace he had just sent adrift was still a thousand times dearer to him than the good dutiful nephew who had never given him an hour's uneasiness. It ought not to be so, he told himself angrily, but he could not root out his love for Dick, although it seemed like an injustice directed against Walter.

Dick bundled his belongings together in less than an hour, and took his departure from the home of his youth and early manhood, refusing to accept a cheque that Walter wished to press upon him.

Consternation and woe reigned supreme

throughout the household when once it became generally known that he was "going for good."

"Shure, an' he was the best-hearted boy in the world," sobbed Molly, the housemaid, while she buried her face in one of Dick's discarded coats, redolent of cigar-smoke and the latest fashionable perfume. "I'll keep the ould coat to remind me of him, that I will. But it's the mather who ought to be well ashamed of himself for sending his own nephew away widout a penny by reason of his being a little wild. That's a quare way to go to work to make a better man of him, I'm thinking."

John Hamilton had an interview with his lawyer on the following day, and made an important alteration in his will. Perhaps that scene with his nephew and the subsequent suffering it entailed upon him helped to sap the old man's remaining strength. He was taken suddenly ill about a week after Dick's departure, and he died before a doctor could be summoned. To the last his thoughts were centred upon the scapegrace.

"I won't break my word, Walter," he said, feebly to the nephew who was supporting his head. "I won't leave your brother so much as a penny, but when I am gone, promise me that you will help him instead. Don't let him come to want, and tell him that before I died I freely forgave him all his wild, wrong-headed actions in the past. Promise me that you will help poor Dick liberally; you will be too rich to miss a few thousands, Walter."

Walter gave the required promise, and then, with Dick's name still upon his lips, old John Hamilton passed quietly away to join the great majority.

CHAPTER III.

THE tidings of his uncle's sudden death caused Dick to experience a great deal of sorrow and remorse—feelings that, in his case, were in no wise connected with filthy lucre.

That angry parting when he had last seen the old man alive preyed upon his mind, and troubled him beyond measure. It was some consolation to learn from Walter that he had been forgiven at the final moment, but he made no reply when his brother alluded to the dead man's wish that his disinherited nephew should be provided for by the one to whom he had left the bulk of his enormous fortune.

It was not pleasant for Dick to know that he was dependent upon his brother for the mere necessities of life, apart from its luxuries; the idea of being a pensioner upon another person's bounty must always carry some disagreeable associations with it. To be an independent legatee is far more agreeable.

"I shall attend the funeral," he said, moodily, "but I shall not be present when the will is read. Uncle John has left me out in the cold, and I won't sit there to be branded as a black sheep by all the well-to-do Pharisees who are sure to muster strong upon such an occasion. Jack Idle will keep in the background, while William Goodchild goes to the front to receive the reward of merit."

"I thought it was Francis," rejoined Walter, with a smile.

"Jack or Francis, it's all the same," was the reply. "He never did any good for himself, and so there's a strong family likeness between us."

Walter Hamilton experienced a strange, pleasant sense of power and authority as the contents of his late uncle's will were gradually unfolded for the benefit of a great many attentive listeners. Did ever anyone have a more attentive audience than a lawyer engaged in reading a will to a number of interested persons?

John Hamilton had provided for all his old servants, beside leaving large sums of money to various charitable institutions. The whole of his colossal business, however, was left without any reservation to his "good and dutiful nephew" Walter Hamilton. Dick's name was not even mentioned; he had been cut off without so much as the proverbial shilling.

Those present regarded the young man upon whom so much wealth and responsibility had suddenly devolved with respectful wonder and quiet envy, but one and all felt sorry for poor Dick.

It annoyed Walter, even in the first flush of his new prosperity, to perceive the sympathy lavished upon the absent and disinherited scapegrace. Relatives, friends, clerks alike shared in the feeling of commiseration, and as for the old housekeeper, to whom the dead man had given an annuity of sixty pounds, the ungrateful old creature sat down and wept, because "Poor dear Master Dick hadn't got so much as the money to buy a mourning ring with."

"It was my uncle's wish that I should make some provision for my brother," Walter explained in his usual terse, concise manner. "It is hardly necessary for me to add that it is my intention to fulfil that wish at the earliest opportunity. But for some irregularity of conduct, into which I need not enter at the present moment, Richard would not have been disinherited, and I do not consider that our deceased uncle was guilty of any harshness or want of forbearance towards his younger nephew."

There was nothing more to be said either for or against the will. People cannot afford to quarrel with Dives when there is no personal motive in question, and Walter Hamilton entered upon the possession of his new property amid general congratulations.

He was really anxious to do something for Dick without loss of time, and a liberal offer was shaping itself out in his mind when an incident came under his notice that tended to dispel all the practical interest he was about to evince in his brother's welfare.

Walking down the Strand one day he caught sight of Dick on ahead, accompanied by a young girl. The two were evidently on familiar terms with each other and Dick was talking earnestly to his pretty, well-dressed companion. Presently they went into a shop to make some trifling purchases. When they came out again Dick was carrying the girl's basket, and after another glance at the tempting shop windows they turned down a side street and vanished from sight.

"I wonder what fresh trouble that wretched boy is brewing for himself now," thought Walter, angrily. "I gave him credit for having kept clear of love affairs thus far. The girl is pretty and lady-like, but she may have designs upon Dick, while her antecedents may be the reverse of desirable. I must ascertain who and what she is before I offer him any help."

When business hours were over Walter Hamilton went to the hotel at which Dick was staying, and found that young gentleman in the act of enjoying a cigar and a split soda, while he perused the pages of the *St. James's Gazette*.

"Dick, I saw you in the Strand this morning with a young woman," he began, after a few preliminary remarks. "I hope you are not drifting into any foolish entanglement. It is much easier to get into such things than to get out of them again, you know."

Dick's fair face flushed hotly.

"You're worse than a private detective," he retorted. "I don't interfere with your love affairs, and you have no right to pry into mine. Do you want the love-making as well as the money to be all on your side, you dog-in-the-manger?"

"I want to feel sure that you are not doing anything calculated to disgrace the family," was the quiet reply. "To love-making, carried out in a proper manner, between suitable persons, I have not the slightest objection, as you are aware; but your behaviour, Dick, has been so erratic, not to say unsatisfactory, that I could hardly help feeling suspicious when I saw you with a female companion. If there is nothing wrong in question, why should you wish to keep your acquaintance with her a secret from me?"

"Right or wrong, I am not bound to tell you everything," said Dick, rather sullenly.

"If you refuse to tell me I shall wash my hands of you altogether," Walter answered, sternly. "I always thought you weak, Dick, but I did not give you credit for being wicked. That girl—"

"Is a good, honest, well-bred girl, fit to be placed on a level with Adelaide Vernon," cried the other. "If you venture to say one word against her we shall quarrel, Walter. I may as well tell you now as later on, although I had wished to keep my secret a little longer, from motives of policy; we are engaged to be married, and she is my fiancée."

"Indeed!" remarked Walter Hamilton, with a curious contraction of his thin, flexible lips. "May I inquire what position in life your fiancée occupies, and what family connections your marriage will entail upon you?"

"Her father is an actor, and Kitty looks after the house, and writes for some of the magazines," explained Dick, conscious that the Lamberts would not find favour in his brother's sight owing to their want of social status. "They are very nice people, Walter, immensely superior to the position they occupy. When you know them you will acknowledge as much, and Kitty will make me an excellent little wife. When once we are married I mean to settle down into a sober, hard-working fellow, so the ceremony cannot take place too soon."

"Will you meet me at Mr. Pierrepont's office to-morrow morning at ten o'clock?" Walter inquired, suavely, quite ignoring the fact of his brother's engagement. "I want to do what I can for you in accordance with Uncle John's wish, and, unless you choose to stand in your own light, Dick, I dare say we shall be able to arrive at an amicable conclusion."

"All right, I'll be there," responded Dick, vexed to think Walter attached so little importance to his engagement that he had not even made a comment upon it. Walter went away soon after the interview had been arranged between them, and each experienced a feeling of relief on being rid of the other; brotherly love between the two men was certainly at a discount.

Far from being indifferent to Dick's engagement, however, Walter Hamilton was profoundly annoyed by it, and he wanted time to devise some plan for bringing it to an end.

About to raise the tone of the family himself by marrying one of the aristocracy, it exasperated him beyond measure to reflect that Dick was doing his best to degrade it, by promising to wed the daughter of a poor actor. What would Adelaide Vernon say should the disgraceful news ever reach her ears?

Not that the Hamiltons had much to boast of in the matter of family. They had always been solid, well-to-do, middle-class people, who, with some few exceptions, had made their money in trade. Nevertheless, they were all great sticklers for caste, and they had a certain position to maintain in society. Dick's contemplated *medalliance* was therefore calculated to fill his brother's soul with indignation and disgust.

"What help I offer him must be purely conditional," Walter Hamilton reflected, when dining by himself in solitary state that night. "Even Uncle John would not wish me to encourage Dick in making a low marriage that would very likely end in the Divorce Court. I fancy my offer will be large enough to tempt him, and, if so, it will not be the first time that Mammon has gained the victory over Love."

Dick contrived to be ten minutes behind time in reaching Mr. Pierrepont's office on the following morning, just to maintain an attitude of independence. Walter made no comment upon his want of punctuality, though; and Mr. Pierrepont, the family lawyer, after a brief salutation, sat back in his leather chair, and waited for proceedings to commence between his clients.

"Mr. Pierrepont and I have been talking the matter over, Dick," said his brother; "and he considers that the offer I am about to make you is a fair and a reasonable one, so far as the pecuniary aspect of it is concerned. With the rest he has nothing whatever to do. Since Uncle John made no provision for you in his will I am prepared to offer you a sum amounting to twenty thousand pounds, or a share in the business representing the same value. Your disinclination for business has induced me to give you this alternative. If you prefer to receive the money it shall be placed to your account at once, but,

in either case, my offer is accompanied by a condition."

"Ah, there is always a 'but' in the background," remarked Dick, sarcastically. "What does your condition consist of? It must be a very big pill, indeed, if so much gold cannot induce me to swallow it."

"Before receiving the sum mentioned you must give me your word of honour that you will abandon all thoughts of the unsuitable marriage with the daughter of an actor that you contemplate making," continued the other, rather nervously. Dick's temper was apt at times to flame out so quickly. "If you persist in taking such a false step I shall give you no assistance whatever. Be reasonable for once, Dick, and don't ruin your life at the turning-point by a wrong decision. Fortune and prosperity await you on the one hand, poverty and an endless succession of squalid ills and vain regrets—the fruits of an unequal match—are ranged upon the other. What is a pretty face in comparison with wealth and a successful career?"

"Or a girl's broken heart, when a man's selfish pride is in question!" said Dick, with a bitter laugh. "The figures certainly had an imposing sound, but you knew when you named them that your offer was a safe one, that I should reject it without a moment's hesitation. You are a capital man of business, Walter."

"I made the offer in all sincerity," rejoined his brother; "and I thought you would have just sense enough to accept it. As for the girl herself, people belonging to that class usually regard pecuniary compensation as a fair equivalent for any sentimental grievance."

"Of course, all the fine feeling is monopolised by those belonging to the upper classes," observed Dick. "They run away with their groans, and they write scandalous paragraphs about their own relatives for the society journals in return for money; but still, the fine feeling is theirs all the same."

"Being only a commoner, I claim the right to act in a different manner. If I wished to break faith with my fiancée I should do so right out, and not insult her by offering her a cheque instead of marriage."

"I love her far too well to do anything of the kind; but had I ceased to care for her, were she old and ugly instead of young and pretty, having once promised to make her my wife, not all the wealth stored up in your warehouses would tempt me to break my promise."

"You deliberately refuse to accept my offer, then?" said Walter, calmly. "Well, if you prefer romance to common sense there is no help for it."

"Your own sense of honour should surely tell you that there is no other course open to me," rejoined Dick, who was fast losing his temper. "Had you really wished to benefit me you would not have burdened your offer of help with such a condition."

"I cannot strain my sense of honour to meet the requirements of the case in point," was the unflinching reply. "I will do nothing to help on a marriage that I disapprove of so strongly. Legally I am not bound to give you a farthing, and since you refuse to fall in with my wishes the moral claim you have upon me is considerably weakened. I cannot waste any more time in trying to change your decision; I must be going."

"You may go to Jericho if you like, without taking a return ticket," said Dick, angrily.

"Oh, come, come, this is a very bad termination to what should have been a satisfactory interview," interposed the lawyer, in a tone of remonstrance. "Sit down again gentlemen, and let us see if we cannot effect a compromise."

"I won't hear of such a thing!" thundered Dick.

"Neither will I," said Walter. "You may look upon my offer as still open to you, Dick, if you care to reconsider your decision. Otherwise I shall not help you by so much as a five-pound note, while your marriage will effect a complete separation between us. I wish you both good-morning."

He went away, leaving Dick and the lawyer still facing each other in perfect silence.

Mr. Pierrepont was a little, chubby-faced, grey-haired man, not unlike an elderly cherub rather the worse for wear; but if his expression was "childlike and bland," very little escaped the notice of his keen, twinkling, dark eyes.

"You've made a nice bonfire of your prospects in life, master Dick," he remarked, consolingly; "and all for the sake of a woman. Dear me, how foolish you young men are."

"Could I, as a man of honour, have acted otherwise?" inquired Dick. "Mind, I am not going to pay you six-and-eightpence for the answer."

"Well, speaking as a private individual, I cannot blame you, although from a professional point of view your conduct is much to be deplored."

"I formed my estimate of your character some time ago, and I must say that I should have been disappointed in you had you accepted your brother's prudent, but somewhat unfeeling, terms."

"I wish, for your own sake, that you had not become acquainted with this—young person. Since you have promised to marry her, though, you could hardly refuse to do so without being guilty of a mean and dishonourable action. What are you going to do now that you have fallen out with your brother?"

"I hardly know," said Dick, thoughtfully. "I must get employment of some kind as soon as possible. A profession is as much out of my reach now as the moon."

"You know something of office work," continued the lawyer; "and I happen to be in want of another clerk. I can offer you a desk in my office, and a salary of a hundred and fifty to start with. That would keep your head above water till something better turned up for you, if you choose to accept it."

"I shall be only too glad to accept it," said Dick, gratefully. "At the end of a week I shall be ready to commence my new duties."

"And what do you want that week for?" inquired Mr. Pierrepont.

"I am going to get married," was the brief reply.

"Ah, well, a wilful man must have his way," said the man of law, with a shrug. "I shall not allow you any special privileges, remember, and you will be placed on the same footing with the other clerks. Above all, you must learn to be punctual."

Dick expressed his willingness to submit to Mr. Pierrepont's rules, and then the employer and the employed parted for the time being. With the excitement of the interview still strong upon him Dick hurried away in the direction of the Lamberts' lodgings.

"Well, Dick, are you a rich man?" said Kitty, as he entered the little sitting-room with a cloud on his usually bright, careless face.

"No, Kitty," he replied; "but I am a free one, and that is better still. We can get married to-morrow without asking anyone's pleasure, and I can work for you and myself with a feeling of proud independence."

"You have quarrelled with your brother," said the actor, quietly.

"Oh, Dick, dear, what made you do it?" cried Kitty. "Was it our engagement that displeased him?"

"Never mind," rejoined her lover. "You are worth more to me than all the gold in the world, Kitty. I've got a situation, think of that, and I'm going to begin work next week. Why, you dear little goose, there's nothing to cry about."

"I don't know whether I'm most glad or sorry to think how much I have cost you," sobbed Kitty.

"But he will not be permitted to lose by it in the end," said her father, warmly. "Mr. Hamilton, I can never thank you enough for remaining constant to my child under such trying circumstances. H—"

"Not another word," interposed Dick, as he threw his arm round the girl's slender waist. "Kitty, stop crying at once, and I Lambert, give me your hand; you, at least, are not ashamed to own me, and, for the future, we three will stick or swim together."

CHAPTER IV.

At the first onset Walter Hamilton was vexed and disappointed because his brother refused to avail himself of the large sum of money offered to him, by reason of the accompanying condition that was so distasteful to the disinherited man.

But after a time Walter began to feel rather glad that Dick had not accepted the twenty thousand pounds once placed within his reach. He was enlarging his business premises, building new shops and warehouses, increasing his stock and adding fresh branches to it, for the benefit of customers. He required all the ready money at his disposal to carry out so many improvements and alterations, and the more he gained the more he seemed to want.

The portion originally set aside for Dick had been swallowed up with the rest, and he would have been placed in an awkward predicament had his brother remained single, and taken him at his word by coming forward to demand the twenty thousand pounds.

At the end of six months from the time of his uncle's death Walter Hamilton's long-deferred marriage with Adelaide Vernon took place. Adelaide insisted upon a fashionable wedding and eight bridesmaids, and she would take no denial. Her uncle, Sir Wilfred Vernon, gave the bride away, and the Vernon family mustered strong upon such an important occasion. Adelaide's relatives were very distinguished people, at least in their own estimation. What they lacked in hard cash they made up for in pride of birth and lineage, and they regarded her marriage with Walter Hamilton as a piece of supreme condescension, for which he ought to feel very grateful. They graciously condescended to superintend the arrangements for the wedding, and since the money was not coming out of the Vernon purse they did not study expense in so doing.

The newly-married pair went to Paris for the honeymoon. Before it was over Walter knew something of his wife's temperament and temperance. Adelaide had married less for love than money, and she was bent upon enjoying to the utmost the various good things of life, for which she had sacrificed her freedom. When once Walter had become her husband instead of her liver it was hardly worth while to wear a mask any longer. She threw it off accordingly, and he saw her in her true colours as a selfish, heartless, beautiful woman, who valued her husband's wealth, although she despised the means by which it was obtained.

The revelation caused him some pain; but it was not in his quiet, cautious nature to love passionately. He cared far more for his lovely wife than she did for him, but her coldness and selfishness did not create such a blank in his life as would have been the case had his affection for her been more intense, or more exacting in its demands.

The Hamilton establishment was a large and expensive one. Walter, who was secretly ambitious to make a figure in society, did not wish it to be otherwise. Only, after a few months of married life, when bills began to pour in upon him from all quarters, even he was astonished and displeased at his wife's reckless expenditure.

"Adelaide, I want to speak to you about your expenditure," he began one morning as they sat at breakfast. "It must be reduced, unless you wish me to figure in the Bankruptcy Court at no distant period. The late Colonel North could have hardly scattered money about more freely than you have been doing of late, and I am not a Silver King, remember."

"You're awfully rich, though," drawled his wife as she sat opposite to him stirring her chocolate, the picture of languid grace, in a pale-blue dressing gown, trimmed with ruffles and flutings of delicate cobweb lace. "I don't see that I've been at all extravagant, and I've got you admitted into a set far superior to the one you were in previous to our marriage."

"I have paid dearly for the privilege, though," said Walter, dryly; "and I don't quite like the supercilious tone that your friends not unfrequently assume towards me in my own house. To eat a man's dinners, and ridicule him for

being what he is at the same time, can hardly be termed good breeding."

"You see, so few of them are accustomed to trade in any shape or form," she remarked, in a tone of quiet insolence.

"Perhaps not," he rejoined, shortly. "Your uncle sends the produce of his hot-houses, and a fair share of his game to the London markets, but that is in no way connected with trade, I suppose. I am not going to stand too much nonsense either from you or yours, Adelaide, and unless you promise to be more careful for the future I shall be compelled to restrict your expenditure to a fixed sum, or my business will go to the dogs."

"I think it is in your nature to be mean," said Adelaide, scornfully. "You refused to help Dick, or to give him anything because you were not obliged to do so. What a princely income he and his wife must be living upon at the present moment! Solicitors' clerks are not overpaid as a rule, are they?"

It was not a fair remark, for Adelaide had never even wished Dick to receive any of his uncle's money. Only she liked to throw the unpleasant fact of his clerical employment in her husband's teeth now and then. She knew how it annoyed Walter to be reminded that his brother was earning his living in a solicitor's office, and that the handsome dandy of days gone by was now hardly so well dressed as his own butler.

Walter pushed his chair away from the table and rose hastily.

"Dick has only himself to thank for the position he now occupies," he said, with forced composure. "I must request you not to mention his name to me again, Adelaide, or to indulge in any more unpleasant remarks concerning him."

Then he went away to business, but his wife's bitter words still rankled in his breast. He could neither forget Dick nor justify the hard, narrow line of conduct he had adopted towards him after their uncle's death.

Dick, however, in spite of his hard work and small salary, was not without advantages. Regular employment and the circumstances that rendered it necessary had helped to steady him and impart a sense of responsibility to his easy-going, unstable nature.

He had married Kitty Lambert before joining at the office. Then the young couple had rented a pretty little house in the suburbs, and commenced housekeeping in serious earnest. Kitty's father lived with them, and that quiet, kindly unobtrusive presence would have been a welcome addition to any household. His engagement at the Adelphi had been followed by a long illness, from which he was only now recovering. Trouble seldom stays long away from such patient, much-tired souls, and yet the inward peace and power of endurance they possess seem only to deepen and intensify with the suffering that falls to their share.

It at times the dull routine of office work seemed intolerable to Dick he stuck to it manfully, and Mr. Pierrepont had no reason to find fault with his new clerk, either in the matter of punctuality or attention to business.

He had only met his brother two or three times since their disagreement. On each occasion Dick had taken the initiative by refusing to recognise him; and Walter, hardly knowing what else to do under the circumstances, had allowed himself to be thus ignored. A reconciliation with Dick would necessitate handing over to him some portion of their late uncle's money and, since Walter was no longer able or willing to do this, he deemed it best for them to remain apart.

Walter's name was never mentioned in Dick's little household. The latter had received very bad treatment at his brother's hands, and any allusion to it was apt to throw him into an unpleasant frame of mind.

Kitty and her father, who studied all Dick's peculiarities, took care to keep the past strictly in abeyance, and his home life was rendered attractive and happy by the loving, faithful hearts for whom he had sacrificed so much in days gone by.

The evenings formed their pleasant time,

for then Dick's work was over for the day, and he was free to enjoy himself in any way that he thought proper.

Some of the best of his old cronies looked him up occasionally and persuaded him to go out with them. At other times he would take Kitty for a row on the river, or to the theatre to see a new play, while Bank holidays were looked forward to with an amount of delight he had never experienced when living with no object save pleasure in view.

The oddest thing about Dick's conversion into a thoughtful, self-reliant man was that it had been brought about in a great measure through Kitty's youth and inexperience.

Had he married a clever managing woman, capable of taking him in tow and looking after him, he would, in all probability, have remained a wild harum-scarum fellow to the end of his days.

But the fact of his wife being a mere child in need of a strong arm to lean upon gave him a sense of responsibility. He had to think for her and himself too, and thus the change was gradually effected.

Kitty in turn did her best to become a model matron, and the young couple laughed over the mistakes they frequently made in housekeeping, while they garnered up wisdom for the future as the result of present failures.

"Dick, you are no better than an impostor when you assert your knowledge of gardening," remarked Kitty one lovely summer's evening, putting down her work to watch her husband, who was on his knees anxiously examining some small green things that had just appeared above the surface of the ground. There was a small garden attached to Dick's house, and he was always trying to cultivate it, but without much success.

"Your seeds hardly ever come up. If they grow at all it must be downwards."

"You put too much earth over them, my boy," said Ernest Lambert, coming up, water pot in hand, to assist in the discussion. "They can't struggle through it."

"If I don't cover them well those confounded cats scratch them all up again," replied Dick, vindictively. "They're worse gardeners than what I am. And you're not in a position to throw stones, Mistress Kitty. Why, the very dog wouldn't condescend to finish the remains of that awful mess you gave us the other day. My gardening is on a level with your knowledge of French cookery, at any rate."

"It requires an educated taste to appreciate French cookery," said his wife, loftily; "and that is what you don't possess. As a rule, I don't think there is much fault to be found with my cooking."

"No, you're a capital cook, except when you take a fancy to try wild experiments with Soyer or Francatello as your guide; then the result is not always a success. When are you going to treat us to another omelette, I should like to know?"

"When you can grow the herbs to flavour it with, and that won't be just yet," was the retort. "Oh, I wonder what he's got for us!" she continued, as a man came up the garden-path, carrying a good-sized box in his hand.

"Your rejected manuscripts come back in a box, Kitty," suggested her husband, who dearly loved to tease his young wife.

Kitty received the box with the scorn it merited, and the box proved to be full of hot-house flowers, which old Mrs. Pierrepont, who took a great deal of interest in the young people, had sent her.

She arranged the lovely blossoms in various bowls and vases, while her husband and father pursued their gardening, free from her sarcastic comments thereupon.

Mr. Pierrepont surprised Dick one day by announcing his intention of raising the latter's salary.

"Your work is worth more now that you are better acquainted with it," he said, "and I cannot help expressing the satisfaction it has given me to see you gradually gaining the ascendancy over many bad habits, and forming good ones instead. Perhaps it was a good thing

for you that you *did* fall out with your brother. So far he has made but a poor use of his great wealth. People are beginning to talk about him, and to say that the business is shaky. His wife is one of the most extravagant women in London, and if he speculates rashly in the effort to increase his income—and I know that he has been doing so lately—he will come to grief."

"I fancy he is too cautious to go far wrong in any of his ventures," said Dick.

"Perhaps so; but mark my words, unless he pulls up speedily and gives his whole attention to the business, as his uncle did before him, he will find himself worse off than —"

"Than the brother he chose to disown," rejoined Dick, quietly finishing the sentence for him.

CHAPTER V.

THINGS were going very badly indeed with Walter Hamilton. The methodical business-like habits he had acquired during his uncle's lifetime were gradually slipping away from him as he acquired a greater liking for ease and pleasure, and a corresponding distaste for hard work.

Adelaide made such extensive demands upon his time that he was compelled to leave the control of his enormous business, to a great extent, in the hands of managers and foremen. These gentlemen, in several instances, took care to feather their own nests at their employer's expense, and thus help to hasten the inevitable end.

Fashionable society possessed great attractions for Walter; he was not the first moth whose wings had been singed in the flame of that brilliant candle, and his growing disinclination for the dry details of trade caused him to neglect the means by which his once large income had been procured.

If the dead really turn in their graves when anything likely to grieve or annoy them takes place on earth old John Hamilton must have gone through that process pretty often as the business that had taken him so many long years to build up dwindled by slow degrees to nothing under his favourite nephew's rule.

That remonstrance from her husband with regard to her extravagant expenditure had produced but little effect upon Adelaide. She countermanded several large orders, it is true, and gave herself credit for great self-denial in so doing. But the expenses of the Hamilton household were in no wise lessened, and Walter found that it was useless to argue with an obstinate, wilful woman, bent on getting her own way at any cost.

Then a mania for speculation took possession of him, and, urged on by some of his new acquaintances, he embarked in several promising enterprises. His first ventures happened to be successful ones, and with this encouragement to buoy him up he risked yet larger sums.

Then the run of luck went against him, and he lost heavily. Still, he persevered with energy worthy of a better cause, but he could not retrieve his losses, and he awoke at length from his feverish dream of wealth to find himself very far indeed along the road to ruin.

Startled and shocked on perceiving the extent of his folly, Walter Hamilton made a desperate effort to prevent a total collapse by giving his whole attention to the neglected business, and turning his back upon the enticing but fatal speculations that had helped to ruin him.

It rendered even his thoughtless wife uneasy to see him return day after day looking worn and haggard, while her inquiries only elicited from him a sharp or a preoccupied response. She hated trade and she never cared to talk "shop," but money was to her a thing of paramount importance, and she feared to lose it.

"I wish you would tell me if things are really going very wrong with us, Walter," Adelaide remarked one day to her husband, who was poring over some accounts. "I would far rather know the worst at once. We seem to be living on the

crust of a volcano that may give way beneath us at any moment."

"You are quite right," was the bitter reply. "The crash must come sooner or later; but, when it comes, don't blame me too severely. Your own extravagance, Adelaide, will have served to bring it about."

"Of course, man-like, you try to put the blame of your own mistakes and follies on to your wife," she retorted. "If you had not speculated so rashly all might have gone well with us as usual, and your business would not have suffered."

"What induced me to speculate in the first instance?" he inquired, wearily. "Was it not the constant drain upon my purse that more than swallowed up the money I gained by means of honest trade? You and your family, Adelaide, have helped to make a bankrupt of me."

"I should not have consented to marry you had I not believed you to be immensely rich," said Adelaide, angrily, "and capable of maintaining me in a suitable manner. If you do fail I shall consider that you have imposed upon me shamefully, and I shall leave you and go back to my friends."

Having thrown this crumb of consolation to the worried, anxious man she swept from the room, leaving him to grapple with his difficulties as best he might.

But there came a day when Walter Hamilton did not return to his home at the usual hour; when the great business premises were closed, and the hundreds of workpeople were in a state of enforced idleness, owing to the failure of their employer.

The news of the bankruptcy was on everyone's lips; it formed the topic of the hour, but the bankrupt himself had mysteriously disappeared.

Adelaide became seriously alarmed as the miserable hours sped by, bringing her no message from her absent husband. For once she actually forgot to think of herself first, or to bemoan the trouble that had fallen upon her in her anxiety about Walter.

She had not been kind or sympathetic in her bearing towards him; she had not attempted to lighten his load of care, and now that he was really missing she felt very ill at ease.

What if, in his loneliness and misery, he had rashly taken his own life rather than endure the reproaches he might expect to receive from his wife in consequence of his failure? The thought was a fearful one, and she could not put it away from her.

The Vernons happened to be at Monte Carlo when the great smash took place, and thus Adelaide had no friend or adviser to whom she could turn for help or advice of an immediate kind in her hour of need.

Suddenly, it occurred to her to send a message to Dick, imploring him to come to her at once, and informing him of Walter's strange disappearance.

She was not at all sure that he would obey her summons, for neither she nor her husband had made the least pretence at recognising Dick and his young wife during the days of their prosperity. Being desperately frightened and quite unable to act for herself, however, she begged him to come to her aid, much as a drowning man is said to catch at a straw.

When Dick received his sister-in-law's note, brought by a smart footman in livery, he perused it with a frown on his face that his wife did not fail to remark.

"Who is your correspondent, Dick?" she inquired, anxiously.

"My brother's wife," he replied, tersely; "you can read the note for yourself. I am the last man in the world from whom she has any right to expect advice or assistance; but Adelaide was never wanting in confidence."

"Oh, Dick, what a dreadful state of affairs," said Kitty, as she read the pitiful appeal for help that another woman had written. "Your brother is acting the part of a coward in going away and leaving his wife to face the storm alone. You must go to her at once."

"Why should you plead for her?" rejoined her husband, sharply. "She has never yet condescended to recognise the fact of your existence,

Kitty, and but for Walter's failure she would have gone on ignoring us to the end. Now that she wants something done she can remember that we are still living, and seek us out; that is Adelaide all over."

"Think how lonely she is!" urged Kitty, pityingly. "She may be a proud, selfish woman, Dick, but I cannot help feeling sorry for her under the circumstances, and I am quite sure that you will not refuse to go to her."

"Why don't her own people come forward in the matter?" grumbled Dick; "and what on earth can have become of Walter? He's not the sort of man lightly to shirk his own liabilities, or to leave a woman to face a lot of furious creditors by herself. There must be something still worse in the background, I'm afraid. He has contrived to make short work of the splendid business that Uncle John left to him in perfect order, free from all pecuniary embarrassments. Had we gone into partnership people would have blamed me for the failure, and pitied Walter for having had anything to do with his scamp of a brother."

"Both he and his wife must have been frightfully extravagant," admitted Kitty; "but they are suffering for it now, and if we can help them why I think we ought to do so. Put animosity on one side, Dick, and give Mrs. Hamilton all the assistance in your power." She must be almost out of her mind, poor thing, in that great house with her husband missing, and only servants around her. Perhaps her own friends are not in England at the present moment."

"You're a good little woman," remarked Dick, as he put on his hat and coat and prepared to depart. "I shall have no peace, I suppose, if I refuse to go, so I may as well start at once. I hope Adelaide doesn't expect me going tramping half over the world in search of Walter, though. Even if he has gone abroad to get out of the way he is sure to write to her before long."

Confusion, suspense, and disorder, pervaded the Hamiltons' residence in Belgrave-square when Dick appeared upon the scene. Two shabby men were already in possession, the servants were inclined to be impertinent and familiar since their wages had not been paid, and the mistress of the house had shut herself in the exquisitely furnished little sitting-room that had been prepared for her own special use at such a liberal outlay.

Adelaide's eyes were red and heavy through excessive weeping, and her rich, dark beauty had a tumbled, dishevelled look. When Dick was announced she rose to greet him with some broken words of gratitude and relief.

"I hardly dared to hope that you would come," she said, wearily. "I know that Walter and I have treated you very badly in the past, and you would have been quite justified in refusing to help me. Oh, Dick, where can he be? What do you think has become of him? I never imagined that my husband would one day desert me in such a cruel manner."

"Did you notice anything strange or unusual in Walter's behaviour last night?" inquired Dick, gravely.

"I did not see much of him," was the hesitating reply. "I dined out, and went to the opera with some friends afterwards. But some time past he has been dull and gloomy, always brooding over business and worries that I failed to understand."

"Well, I will do what I can to find him and persuade him to adopt a more reasonable line of conduct. But what is to become of you, meanwhile? You can't stay here any longer; it's not a fit place for you. Have you any friends in town who would take you in for the present?"

"No, my uncle and his family are abroad," she rejoined with a sob; "and there is no one else that I should care to stay with under the circumstances. I suppose I must go to an hotel."

"You can do that, or you can go home with me, whichever you like best," said Dick, not unkindly. "Hotel proprietors are fond of running up long bills, and according to all accounts you will have no money to spare when Walter's affairs

are settled. My wife will make you welcome if you decide upon paying us a visit. Indeed, it was chiefly owing to her persuasion that I came here to-day."

"I will go back with you, then, since you are kind enough to offer me a temporary home," Adelaide replied, submissively. "I cannot stay here any longer with those dreadful men prowling about the house, taking an inventory of everything in it."

"Then you had better tell your maid to put a few things together for you, and we will start at once. When I have left you with my wife I shall be able to turn attention to Walter, and make some inquiries about him. Since it is already so late you must not expect to receive any tidings of him until to-morrow. I am quite at a loss to understand the strange manner in which he is acting."

In silence and sorrow Adelaide Hamilton left the splendid home that had witnessed so many of her social triumphs, and accompanied her brother-in-law to Laburnum Villa.

Kitty had the tact to receive her unexpected and unknown visitor without evincing any surprise. Her unobtrusive sympathy and gentle courteous bearing were very grateful to Adelaide who had not expected to find such a lovely and well-bred girl in Dick's plebeian wife.

Leaving the two women together, Kitty busily employed in ministering to the requirements of her guest, Dick Hamilton went out again, late as it was, to see Mr. Pierrepont, and ascertain his opinion respecting Walter's affairs and his present whereabouts.

But the old lawyer could help him but little. As Walter Hamilton's legal adviser he knew how his client stood, and he could form a rough estimate of his liabilities. He could not tell what had become of him, though, or why he had chosen to decamp instead of manfully weathering out the financial storm.

"Other men have failed for an equally large amount before now," he remarked, "and yet they have had the common sense to stand their ground and come to an understanding with their creditors. Your brother is not a nervous or a cowardly man, and there must be something more than I am aware of—something that has not transpired yet—to induce him to act thus strangely."

The lawyer's words helped to confirm Dick's own previously formed opinion, but they did not help to put him upon Walter's track.

On leaving Mr. Pierrepont he went back to the house in Belgrave-square, in the forlorn hope that Walter might have been there, or have forwarded some communication intended for his wife within the last few hours. But the confidential servant who answered his questions had no good news to impart, and Dick went away with the intention of abandoning the search until the following day.

He had got some little distance from his brother's house when he noticed the figure of a man stealing along in the deep shadow of the opposite side, evidently anxious to escape observation. A soft hat was pulled low down over his brows, but the man's height and carriage reminded Dick strongly of his brother.

Some instinct prompted him to turn back and watch the proceedings of the individual who had attracted his attention from a safe distance.

He came to a standstill immediately in front of the Hamiltons' house, and stood there for nearly five minutes, gazing at it long and earnestly, then he went on again with a quicker and more decided step.

To Dick's keen perception he appeared to have been taking a final leave of it before committing some irretrievable act.

Forgetting his fatigue Dick determined to follow him, and ascertain if he were really the missing man.

He walked so rapidly, however, that his pursuer had some difficulty in keeping him in sight, and he could not overtake him without turning the pursuit into a positive chase.

Dick experienced an odd thrill as the man he was following presently made for the Embankment.

What motive could he have in seeking such a lonely spot at such an hour?

Fortunately the pursued did not once look behind him, or in that quiet place he would have become aware that he was being followed.

He went on at the same rapid pace for some distance along the Embankment, then he stopped and looked down at the river, flowing on so placidly in the pale moonlight. His profile was thus exposed to view, and, in spite of the slouched hat, Dick recognized his brother's face. But what an expression of intense pain and set purpose rested on the white, agonized features! Never, to the last day of his life, did the startled onlooker forget it.

Ere Dick could approach him Walter Hamilton suddenly disappeared down the flight of stone steps leading to the river.

No longer in doubt as to his identity, or the purpose he had in view, Dick bounded down after him.

As he reached the water's edge a grasp of iron seized his arm—a grasp that drew him back against his will from the self-destruction he was so blindly seeking.

"Dick! Good Heavens! What brings you here?" exclaimed the would-be suicide, as he glanced up into the face of his deliverer.

"Come away from the water at once," said Dick, roughly, turning him sharply round in an upward direction. "To think that you should be mad and wicked enough to attempt your own life, braving the unknown in order to avoid the terrors of the known. I am ashamed of you, Walter; I thought you had more moral courage. You had better sit down and recover yourself a little before I take you home with me."

Walter Hamilton sank down upon one of the seats and hid his pale face in his hands. The reaction from the intense excitement he had undergone was setting in, and he trembled in every limb.

"Dick, when you know all you will regret having drawn me back from the jaws of death," he said, bitterly. "I should have escaped penal servitude then, and others would not have had to suffer through my disgrace."

"I shall never regret saving you from the consequences of a moment of frenzy," replied Dick, firmly. "You must be off your head, Walter, to talk so wildly. Bankrupts are not, as a rule, liable to penal servitude."

"Men who commit a felony are, though," observed his brother. "And I was once your mentor! The relation in which we formerly stood to each other has been completely reversed."

Dick said nothing; as he gazed at the haggard, prematurely-aged, shame-stricken man before him, he could hardly recognise the trim, dapper, immaculate Walter of days gone by.

CHAPTER VI.

FOR a while the brothers remained silent. Walter Hamilton had sunk into a kind of lethargy, and Dick forbore to question him from a dread of the incriminating facts his inquiries might elicit. What could the former have done to bring himself within the pale of the law—*he who had enjoyed such golden opportunities, and flung them all to the four winds in utter recklessness?*

The glory of moonlight and starlight steeped the earth in mystic loveliness; the feverish pulses of the great city were beating quietly under the touch of night's cool hand, and a sense of some mighty unseen presence filled the calm air, and helped to allay the restless human pain and longing.

Walter presently broke the silence by saying, wearily,—

"Dick, how came you to recognise me, and follow me to this place?"

"I had only just come away from your house," explained Dick, "when I caught sight of you, and thinking that you had some wrong motive in view I took care that you did not escape me."

"What had you been doing there?" inquired Walter, with returning interest.

"Adelaide sent for me," he replied. "What with your unaccountable absence, and the news of your failure, she was well-nigh frantic. I took her to my place and left her in the care of my wife. Then I sallied out again in the effort to discover your whereabouts. Fortunately I happened to come across you in the very nick of time."

So it had come to this; Adelaide, in spite of her aristocratic connections, had been thankful to accept a refuge with the woman whom her husband had punished his brother so severely for marrying. What further humiliation had the cruel gods in store for him, Walton Hamilton wondered vaguely.

"It may sound paradoxical," he said, emphatically, "and yet, Dick, in leaving her as I did, I was really trying to study my wife's interests, and to spare her from pain. I felt certain that her friends would provide for her, and that she would not be disgraced in the eyes of society by means of her husband's shortcomings; on that account I determined to put myself out of the way. I am aware that it was a very wrong course to decide upon. Now that you have saved me from it my choice lies between perpetual exile or a felon's cell."

"What have you done to entitle you to the last-named distinction?" asked Dick, quietly. "If I am to help you there must be no secrets between us."

"You remember Matthew Hart?"

"Yes; he was Uncle John's oldest friend. What of him?"

"A few weeks before his death took place," continued Walter Hamilton, "he sent for me to Cannes, where he was staying, and acquainted me with some facts concerning his early life."

"When a young man he had fallen deeply in love with a beautiful and accomplished woman. She rejected him, however, in favour of a friend of his who had gone on the stage, and was trying to earn a living in that manner. Soured by disappointment, Matthew Hart, as you are aware, remained a bachelor all his life, while he cherished a feeling of enmity against the man who had unwittingly robbed him of so much happiness. Gentler, better feelings and a more forgiving mood came to him, though, as the end drew near."

"Since he had long lost sight of his old love and her husband, who were supposed to be in very poor circumstances, he requested me to set inquiries on foot for the purpose of discovering them."

"I also promised faithfully to fulfil any trust he might wish to impose upon me. I could gain no tidings of the people in question, but when Mr. Matthew Hart died it was found that he had intrusted the sum of four thousand pounds to me to be handed over to the husband and wife whenever they came forward to claim it. The great confidence he reposed in my integrity, so ran the will, had induced him to select me as the one most likely to carry out his last and dearest wish in the most effective manner."

"What became of the money? Did the actor and his wife ever receive it?" asked Dick, hurriedly. The shadow of a great disgrace seemed to deepen round them as he spoke.

"I invested it well," said the other, "and at first I did all in my power to discover the rightful owners. I could not trace them, though, and after awhile my own affairs began to go wrong. In an evil hour, being sorely pressed for funds, I appropriated the trust-money to my own use, fully intending to refund it in the course of a week or two. The opportunity for doing so never came, but the final crash did, and Matthew Hart's money has gone with the rest. It is I after all who has brought disgrace upon the family, not you, Dick. Your faults were merely venial ones, the result of high, animal spirits; you always took care to keep your honour intact. Fool that I was to give way beneath the first temptation! I was so certain that I should speedily be able to return the money I had borrowed."

"That is always the case," said Dick, coldly. His brother's confession had shocked and distressed him more than anything had ever done before. "Were these people to turn up un-

expectedly you would be placed in an awkward predicament. As it is you will have to leave England without delay. Matthew Hart's nephew, the solicitor, is doubtless aware of the trust-money, and he will be making inquiries about its safety when once he hears of your failure."

"I am more afraid of him than of anyone else," admitted his brother. "If I am ever arrested and put upon my trial it will be through his agency. It annoyed him in the first instance to know that he was passed by; that the money had been left in my keeping instead of his. He has been instituting a search for the missing pair on his own account, and the other day I received a letter from him to the effect that he had obtained a clue to their present whereabouts, and would shortly be able to produce them. He dislikes me, and he would do anything to accomplish my ruin. I feel as if a detective with a warrant for my arrest were already at my elbow."

"We must get you across the Channel as soon as possible," said Dick, moodily. "The disgrace and misery of a criminal prosecution would reflect upon us all more or less. But for this lapse of yours, Walter, you might have started afresh after compounding with your creditors. The business failure would have been, comparatively speaking, a light matter had you but steered clear of positive dishonesty. I don't wish to blame you, since reproach is useless, but you've made an awful mess of it, old fellow."

"I know that only too well," was the reply.

"You had better come home with me now and get a night's rest. To-morrow we must arrange some plan for sending you away to a safe hiding-place. Promise me first that you will not make any further attempt upon your own life. Then I need not mention the circumstances under which we met to the women at home."

Walter Hamilton gave the required promise in all sincerity, and then the two men, after walking for some distance, got into a "growler," and were rapidly jolted along in the direction of Dick's modest establishment.

"By the-by, you did not mention the name of Matthew Hart's friend," Dick observed, as they sat opposite to each other in the unsavoury darkness of the cab.

Walter Hamilton mentioned it listlessly. Since the money was gone, and he was quite unable to replace it, it could do no good to enter into the details of the miserable affair.

He could not see what an effect the mere utterance of a name had produced upon his brother, or he would have been considerably startled. His crime had suddenly become a matter of personal interest to Dick.

"How would you like to be brought face to face with the man you have robbed?" the latter asked abruptly, while he regarded his brother with a strange mixture of anger and relief.

Walter winced perceptibly, the question was such a cruel one.

"I would rather die a thousand deaths," he said, faintly, "especially if he happened to be old and poor, in actual want of the money that I have deprived him of. I am still capable of regretting the cruel sin itself, as well as the penalties it has entailed upon me."

"Then you are not altogether worthless," thought Dick, "and I will intercede for you, with every hope of obtaining a free pardon."

Kitty and Adelaide, who were on the look-out, received their respective husbands with a warm welcome.

Walter's haggard, care-worn appearance prevented Adelaide from uttering any reproaches. She was thankful enough to see him after the fright she had undergone, and when she began to question him respecting his long absence from her Dick came to his relief by saying—

"He is not in a condition to answer any questions to-night, Adelaide. You must wait until to-morrow for your explanation."

After a scarcely-tasted meal the various members of the little household retired for the night; yet one of them, at least, was too ill at ease to obtain much rest.

"Dick, what do you think?" said his wife, as they sat at breakfast on the following morning in the pretty little room full of sunshine and the

scent of flowers, Walter and Adelaide being still upstairs. "While you were away yesterday evening a gentleman called here and inquired for Mr. Lambert. Father happened to be out, and he said he would call again at eleven. He asked me a great many questions about him, and seemed very anxious to see him. I told daddy that perhaps someone has left him a fortune; these strange things do happen sometimes. He must take care to be at home this morning when the visitor calls."

"Such an odd thing for anyone to come after me," remarked Ernest Lambert, cracking his egg and stirring his coffee with a zest imparted by the thought of the coming visit. "A more unimportant or unsought man than myself can hardly exist anywhere throughout the world. Don't be too sanguine, Kitty. I expect it will prove to be someone else of the same name that the unknown is in search of!"

Dick said nothing at the moment, although he felt intensely thankful that his father-in-law had happened to be from home when the man in quest of him came to Laburnum Villa.

The "pumping process"—supposing that to be the object in view—would otherwise have been carried on to perfection with the simple-minded old actor.

"Your visitor won't arrive for nearly two hours yet, father," he said, as they all rose from the table. "And I have something to say to you meanwhile. Shall we go into the garden and leave Kitty a clear field, since she has her guests to look after?"

"But it is time for you to start for the office, Dick," rejoined Kitty, wanderingly.

"I am not going to-day," responded her husband, "and I have informed Mr. Pierrepont to that effect. As it is, I have more business to get through before eleven o'clock than you are aware of, little woman."

Kitty, as she went to and fro on hospitable thoughts intent, wondered what her husband and father could have to discuss with so much earnestness, and which Dick evidently did not wish her to hear.

Glancing from the window now and then she could see them walking up and down the little garden, Dick doing the lion's share of the talking, while Ernest Lambert listened attentively.

Presently, to her astonishment, the two men shook hands as if they had just formed some compact. When they re-entered the house the air of anxiety that had previously distinguished Dick's manner was no longer visible, while Ernest Lambert's face wore a thoughtful pre-occupied expression.

"I hate mysteries," thought Kitty, "especially when I am not at the bottom of them. They might as well tell me what is going on."

But her attention was diverted just then by Adelaide, who came downstairs with the information that Walter had passed a wretched night, and felt very ill.

(Continued on page 380.)

ROWLAND'S KALYDOR.—There are few women who do not desire to have a fine soft skin, and the attainment of this during the summer months is often most difficult. The sea-breezes and scorching sun, however delightful they may be, often affect the skin in a disastrous manner. It is generally the finest and fairest skin that is most easily affected, and ladies who suffer from the effects of cutting winds or summer sun will find Rowland's Kalydor the best remedy for keeping the skin in good condition even in the most trying weather. After a day on the sea or river, or cycling on a dusty road, a delicate skin should not be touched with soap and water, but should be gently wiped over with a soft handkerchief soaked in Kalydor; this will prevent the discomfort of burning and often blistered skin, and subsequent freckles. Gentlemen, too, will find it most useful in allaying irritation after shaving. It is warranted free from lead or any mineral ingredient of any kind, and can be used with perfect safety on the most delicate skin. It is sold at 3s. 6d., 4s. 6d., and 2s. 6d. per bottle, by chemists, perfumers, and hair-dressers generally.

THE HEIRESS OF WYNDCLIFF.

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CHAPTER XXII.

AN IMPORTANT CLUE.

"WHAT'S the matter, old chap? You seem upset," exclaimed Leslie, noticing with some concern the pallor of his friend's face. "Have I said anything that has bowled you over?"

"I have had an illness lately, and I'm not quite so strong as I was, I suppose," returned Gerald with a faint smile. "But I am immensely interested in your story. Pray go on with it."

"Where was I? Oh, I remember. I was telling you about the Rance's jewels. I don't think there would have been any fuss made over them if she had not taken away the sacred ruby as well, because it was quite true that the old Rajah had given them to her for her own. But she was a haughty, self-willed woman, and seemed to attach some mystic importance to the ruby; besides, I suppose she knew that her life was not safe after her husband's death, so she managed to escape from the Palace, and kept her secret so well that she was never traced. It was supposed she went to England, but no one really knew. She left behind her a daughter, who in time grew up, and married her cousin, the present Rajah's brother. Her son, whose name is Nadir, is the young man who undertook to search for the sacred ruby. He has been away from India for nearly twelve months, and just before I reached Tagipoor he had returned, bringing with him not only the ruby but every one of the crown jewels that the Rance had taken with her. Isn't it a romantic story?"

"It is indeed—most romantic, if it be true," returned Gerald, half bewildered at this strange verification of what poor Elaine had told him concerning her grandmother's jewels.

"Oh, it's true enough. I'll tell you how I learned it. I happened to render a service to one of the police officials,—as a matter of fact Leslie had saved the man's life,—and he, to show his gratitude, told me he would take me to the great ceremonial that was held in the temple, to commemorate the return of the jewel, and its replacement in the breastplate of the god. But in order to get inside the temple I had to stain my face and disguise myself as a Hindoo, otherwise I should have been murdered. However, all went well, happily for me, and I must say the scene I witnessed was fully worth the risk I ran. It was gorgeous in the extreme and really impressive. But I have not told you the strangest part of the story. You know that Brahmans believe in the re-incarnation of souls?"

Gerald nodded assent. He was perfectly aware of the doctrine that when a human being dies its soul finds lodgment in another body, probably that of a new born babe.

"Well, the priest declared that the Rance who had disappeared with the jewels had done so in obedience to a command of the gods, in order that Nadir—the nephew of the present Rajah—might have an opportunity of proving the fervour of his religious devotion by bringing the gems back. And further, that the soul of the Rance had been re-incarnated in the same body, as a proof of Brahma's favour. So after the great religious ceremonial the newly incarnated Rance was shown lying on a couch, at the foot of the statue erected half a century ago by the last Rajah, and there I myself saw her."

"Her face was unveiled only for a moment, but quite long enough for everyone to see that it was identical with that of the statue. I never was so taken aback in all my life. There was the marble figure carved over fifty years ago, and there was the girl from whom it was taken, lying just under it, and not looking a day older. Upon my word, for the minute I felt inclined to believe that what the priest asserted was true, and that a miracle really had been worked. But what is up with you, Carew—you look perfectly ghastly!"

Gerald had started to his feet, and laid his hand on the other's wrist. His excitement was

intense, and his voice when he spoke was hoarse and strained.

"Did you really see this girl, Leslie, or are you only imposing on me a story told by other people?"

"My dear fellow, I saw her with my own blessed eyes, in token of which I rubbed 'em hard to make sure they were not playing me a trick. I was near enough to see her face with perfect distinctness, and a charmingly pretty face it was too! I'll swear she's English—if she isn't, as they say, the Rance herself come back to life after half a century! She looked half dazed, as if she didn't quite understand where she was, or what was being done to her, but she was a living woman, and the very image of the statue, the photograph of which I have just shown you."

There was no doubting the truth of Leslie's statement; he spoke clearly and pointedly, and with the graphic air of one who tells what he knows to be absolutely correct. Strange as the coincidence was, it was none the less true that this old friend of his had been the means of putting into Carew's hands the very clue of which he had been in search—for there seemed to him no doubt that Nadir, the Rajah's nephew and heir, was none other than Hilliard, who had come to Wyndhill Castle in search of the famous jewels, and having obtained them, had returned to India, bringing with him not only the gems, but Elaine as well.

It all seemed clear as daylight to Gerard now; the mystery of his measuring the walls, his interest in all the old documents relating to the Castle, and his hasty departure from it. Of course Carew did not know where and under what circumstances he had found the diamonds, nor his connection with Heera at the Rookery, but these were mere details. The main facts were clear enough.

His mind was instantly made up. He must go at once to Tagipoor, and rescue Elaine from her captors.

Speaking on the impulse of the moment, he then and there gave Leslie an account of the motives that had brought him to India, and the strange events that preceded his departure from England—to which the younger man listened in the utmost amazement.

And, indeed, the story sounded much more like a page of romance than a sober recital of events that had happened in this prosaic nineteenth century.

"It beats everything I ever heard in my life!" he exclaimed. "But I quite agree that the next thing is for you to go to Tagipoor. Still, I warn you that the journey will not be without peril. The people are wild, and hate Europeans, and naturally Hilliard, or Prince Nadir as he is there called, will have few scruples in disposing of you if he gets the chance. Yes, the journey will be dangerous."

"If it were fifty times more dangerous I should still undertake it!" exclaimed Gerard. "Besides, I know these people fairly well. I have travelled in their country, and I can speak their language. You are already aware that difficulties don't daunt me."

"No; but there are more than mere difficulties to be faced—there are great perils. Why not go to the Government, state your case, and ask for help? They would probably send a regiment of soldiers with you to bring back the English lady."

Carew smiled at the ignorance displayed by the remark.

"My dear Leslie, you are not acquainted as I am with the Hindoo character. Why, if I were to do as you say Elaine would be dead and buried before we got half way to Tagipoor, or so securely hidden that there would not be the least chance of ever finding her. My only hope is to keep my mission secret, and find my way into the palace without my identity being suspected. Did you not say you knew one of the officials?"

"Yes, a decent old chap named Haiz. I dare say he'll render you all the aid he can, for from what I could make out he wasn't too well disposed towards Prince Nadir. He gave me this amulet as a sort of talisman," added Leslie,

taking from his neck a thin gold chain, from which depended a curiously shaped ornament, inscribed with Arabic characters. "He said it would keep me from all danger of poison; but I'll risk the poison, and hand you over the amulet with the greatest pleasure. If you show it to him he'll recognise it, and will probably help you. At the same time my impression is that in attempting to enter the Rajah's palace you will be running your head into the lion's mouth."

"It won't be for the first time," returned Gerard, with a slight smile.

That same evening he announced to Hassan his intention of starting the next day for Tagipoor. It struck him that the man received the news with something like consternation, but when he asked him if he had ever been in the province the reply was an immediate negative.

The following morning Hassan was nowhere to be found. Gerard made exhaustive inquiries, but no one seemed to have noticed his departure, and the conclusion Carew naturally came to was that he desired to keep his destination a secret.

The young man was considerably annoyed, for he had grown to like and trust the Hindoo, and had looked forward to his assistance in the task he had set himself to perform—a task of much difficulty and danger, as no one knew better than himself.

"You'll easily be able to get another servant," observed Leslie, consolingly, when he learned the state of affairs. "There are heaps about."

"So there may be; but I very much doubt whether I shall discover one who will satisfy my requirements," was Carew's dry rejoinder. "I must have a man on whom I can absolutely rely, and such are not easily to be found."

The search for one not only hindered him, but ended in disappointment. As Leslie said, there were dozens of men who were willing to take service under Carew, but not one of them was deemed suitable by him.

"Tell you what, Gerard, I'll come with you myself!" exclaimed Leslie, in whom the spirit of adventure had strongly awoke. "It's a dangerous experiment, but I'll see you through it!"

To this, however, Carew would not agree. In the first place he had no desire to lead his friend into peril, and secondly, he was of opinion that Leslie's rash and outspoken nature might at any moment bring him into collision with the authorities. Moreover, Leslie's ignorance of the language would alone have proved an insuperable obstacle; so rather to the young man's disappointment he declined his companionship.

"After all," he said, "it may perhaps be wiser for me to go quite alone. I shall then be entirely dependent upon myself, and shall know exactly what I am about, and if, as I hear, there is to be another great religious celebration in Tagipoor in honour of the god whose jewels has been restored I intend joining in the service as a pilgrim. It will be easy enough to disguise myself, and not the first by many a time that I have done it."

The next day he left Calcutta, and Leslie, as he bade him good-bye, wondered whether he would ever set eyes on him again.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BETRAYED.

THE Temple of Brahma, at Tagipoor, was one of the most magnificent of its kind. Built of white marble, and enriched with the wonderful carving that is found only in those lands where men's handiwork is a visible token of their religion, it stood in a clearing, surrounded by a sacred grove of mango trees. Inside it glittered with gold and coloured marbles, and at the far end was a large statue of Brahma, regarded with peculiar sanctity by its devotees, who ascribed to it the power of working miracles. Since the restoration of the sacred ruby, which now burned like a star in its breastplate, the feelings of veneration it had inspired were redoubled, and the priests reaped a rich harvest from the offerings of the numerous pilgrims who came to lay their presents at its shrine.

A great festival had been held when first the ruby was put back by the hand of one of the oldest of the priests, who had been a young boy when it had disappeared half a century ago. To-day a second festival was in process, not on so large a scale as the first, but attended, nevertheless, by a great concourse of worshippers, amongst whom were several pilgrims.

A double row of magnificently carved pillars ran round the Temple, and behind the shadow of one of these knelt a pilgrim whose dress and general appearance did not in any way distinguish him from the others prostrating themselves in adoration of the idol, except that while their eyes were for the most part fixed on the ground he glanced sharply round as if in search of some object on which they had not as yet rested.

It was Carew, who, with his whole body stained and wearing the usual white dress of the pilgrims, and a white turban twisted round his brow, looked a veritable Oriental, though his tall and well-developed figure formed a contrast to the slighter frames of most of his supposed compatriots.

He had no difficulty in obtaining admittance to the Temple, but so far he had gained nothing by his entrance—not even a sight of the Prince Nadir.

The religious ceremonial was now over, and he was just meditating departure when a Hindoo approached and, bowing low, said that his presence was desired by the priests in an inner chamber.

Carew was astonished and a little alarmed by the message, whose meaning he could not guess. At first he thought of refusing compliance, but a glance round warned him of the foolishness, if not impossibility, of doing so.

Most of the worshippers had left the Temple, and those that remained would undoubtedly have assisted the priests in enforcing their commands if he had attempted to disobey them.

There was no alternative for him but obedience, so he signified consent and followed the man who had spoken, noticing that two other Hindoos had risen from their knees and were keeping close behind him, evidently with a view of preventing any attempt on his part to escape. At the same moment there came the sound of the shutting of the great door of the Temple—a signal that all chance of retreat was cut off.

Gerard thrust his hand inside the drapery of his white tunic, feeling for the tiny revolver that was concealed there. He was more satisfied when his fingers closed over it. At least, if treachery had betrayed him, he could avenge it.

His guide conducted him to a chamber that was apparently at the back of the Temple and built like it, of white marble. There were no hangings on the walls, and only a couple of rugs on the floor.

About twelve people were assembled inside, half of these being armed, while the other half wore the white vestures of the priests and the "punul," or sacred thread, which denoted their office. The eldest of these, a venerable-looking man with white hair, was the spokesman.

"Who are you, and what do you here?" he inquired in Hindustanee.

Carew's answer came glibly enough in the same language. His name was Abdul, he was a pilgrim who had come to worship at the sacred shrine.

He was not of the Province of Tagipoor, but he had a petition to make, and he had journeyed many weary miles to pray before the altar of the sacred ruby.

The priest listened with an air of incredulity, then made a swift sign to a subordinate, who approached Carew, holding in his hand a small bowl containing liquid, and a piece of linen.

Before Gerard was aware of their intention two men near him had caught him by the arms, and while he was thus held the first one dipped the linen in the bowl and then applied it to his wrist, with the result that the brown dye disappeared, leaving exposed a sufficient portion of white skin to show that he was at least no Hindoo.

"Ah!" murmured the priest, turning to the others, from amongst whom a low murmur of distrust proceeded. "It is as we suspected."

"This is a Feringhee (foreigner) come as a spy to profane our Temple and insult our gods. What is the penalty he has incurred, my brothers?"

"Death!" was their immediate reply. "Only his blood can wipe out the stain."

The old man turned to Carew.

"You hear," he said, calmly. "Doubtless when you came you knew the risk you ran in case of discovery. Have you any explanation to offer for your intrusion?"

They all listened eagerly for his answer, but Gerard merely shook his head.

Taken aback as he undoubtedly was, he yet did not lose his presence of mind, although it seemed pretty clear to him that he had fallen into a trap which had been deliberately set for him.

It was useless to deny that he was a white man after the proof before their eyes; and he had been so perfectly secure in his own mind from any chance of being found out that he had not taken the trouble to concoct a second explanation.

In point of fact, what had happened was so totally unexpected that it found him quite unprepared.

At a sign from the old priest the Hindoo who had first approached Carew in the Temple now came forward with three others and securely bound his wrists, while the priests, who watched the operation with much interest, seemed to be conferring together.

From what Gerard could gather they were deciding when and where the death sentence passed upon him was to be carried out.

Apparently they found it hard to come to a decision. Some difficulty seemed to be in the way, but what its nature was he could not guess.

Much opportunity for spying out was not given him. At a sign from the head priest the men who had bound him conducted him from the apartment, and through a long passage to a smaller room, which contained for furniture a bundle of matting thrown in one corner. Here they left him, and he heard the huge key turn in the lock after they had shut the door.

Although it cannot be said that the young man relished the situation his most pronounced feeling was one of extreme curiosity as to who had betrayed him. His disguise was so perfect, he spoke Hindustanee so well, and was so thoroughly acquainted with the customs of the country, that he had never once thought he would be suspected. Moreover, since his first departure from Calcutta he had taken every possible precaution that occurred to him. If he had had a servant with him he could have understood it better.

Suddenly the remembrance of Hassan and his hasty departure flashed across him. He had told the man his destination—was it possible he had been the traitor?

"Well, it doesn't much matter how I came here, since here I am," he muttered philosophically. "The question now is—how am I to escape?"

It was a question to which no answer presented itself. To bribe his guards was out of the question. Fond as the Hindoo may be of money, it is as nothing when weighed in the balance against his religious zeal.

The hours wore on. Presently one of his gaolers came in to bring him a little rice. Gerard tried to question him, but no answer was made to his inquiries, and the man left the cell with a perfectly impassive countenance, as if he were not even aware he had been addressed.

At last night fell, and the prisoner threw himself on the matting, with the laudable determination to make himself as comfortable as circumstances would permit. As he had once observed to Hassan, "What is to be, will be," and if he was to die he could do no good by meditating on his approaching fate. So far as he himself was concerned death presented no especial terrors; what seemed so hard was that he should have penetrated so far the mystery of Elaine's disappearance, and then, when he was perhaps within a few hundred yards of her, he should be effectually prevented from rescuing her.

Despite his peril he fell into a deep sleep, from which he was aroused by the flashing of a light

across his eyelids. Instantly he sprang up, thinking that his death sentence was about to be carried out, and his gaoler had come to conduct him to the place of execution.

But it was neither his captors nor the priests who confronted him. It was instead a tall and handsome young man, dressed in native attire, whose splendour was lit up by the light he carried—a young man with dark eyes and a black moustache, carefully curled at the ends, who stood opposite Carew and regarded him with mingled hate and triumph.

"Hilliard!" exclaimed Carew.

His visitor nodded.

"Yes, Hilliard, or Prince Nadir, which you like best. I hear your hours are numbered, Mr. Carew, so I have come to bid you a last farewell!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE PRINCE EXPLAINS.

CAREW bit his lips hard to keep back the words that rose to them. Not until this moment had he realized what his captivity really meant, but with his enemy standing opposite, regarding him with victorious malice, while his own hands were bound, and he knew himself entirely at his tormentor's mercy—this was indeed the bitterness of death itself!

"Things have changed since we last met," went on Hilliard, and the smile deepened under his moustache. "Life is a see-saw—he who is up to-day is down to-morrow. You have had your turn, and now it is mine."

"Of which you are apparently determined to make the most!" was Gerard's contemptuous retort. "We have a proverb which bids us not kick a man when he is down; but I don't suppose you even understand the meaning of that, much less the moral it is intended to convey."

"I understand that it is an extremely stupid proverb, as indeed are most of your Western sayings. To me, it seems that the only opportunity you get for kicking a man is when he is down! However, with that I have nothing to do. The priests of the god you have insulted have pronounced your doom. I merely came out of curiosity to see how you bore yourself in a particularly uncomfortable position."

He spoke in English, quietly and nonchalantly, while half leaning against the wall. An attendant stood like a brown statue near the door, holding in his one hand a drawn sword, and in the other a lantern, whose rays flashed into the darkly handsome face of the prince, and scintillated in starry radiance round the diamonds with which his dress was adorned.

Gerard, standing opposite, with his hands bound, and looking far more like a Hindoo than his companion—for, of course, his skin was still stained with the brown dye, though the streak of white showed plainly enough at his wrist—glared at him with impotent rage, which, however, he tried his best to conceal. What would he not have given to be free and able to meet this man on equal terms!

"Did you expect to see me cringing and praying to you to intercede on my behalf?" he exclaimed, scornfully.

"No, Englishmen are not made like that. I have always given you and your countrymen credit for courage, which often amounts to foolhardiness. You, Mr. Gerard Carew, have been extremely fool-hardy, otherwise you would not find yourself talking to me here at the present moment; but as your future career won't give you opportunities for a further display of this questionable virtue I need not quarrel with you on the point. I suppose you know the risk you ran when you came to Tagipoor?"

"Yes; but if it had been fifty times as great I should still have come."

"In the hope of finding your lost love?"

Gerard's lips twitched. His fingers pressed hard into his palms.

"Of finding her, or avenging her."

"And after all you will succeed in neither! Ere the day dawns you will be lying on these

stones, immovable, lifeless, with a cord twisted round your neck."

"Ah! Then I am to be strangled?"

"I believe so."

"As well that death as any other. It is less painful than some, and more speedy. You observe I have a laudable determination to see the best points even in a bad case."

Hilliard looked at him with unwilling admiration.

"You are no coward, that is clear; but you are a fool, and that is, in its effects, worse. You matched your wits against mine, and it was a foregone conclusion that I should win the game. I should like to know, though, what made you first suspect me at Wyndell Castle?"

"Because, on the very night after my arrival, I saw you measuring the walls."

"Ah, I thought it was something like that. And afterwards?"

"Afterwards I knew you had been in the musician's room," replied Carew, who saw no reason now why he should not be perfectly open with Hilliard on these points, "I heard you talking to someone within."

"It was Heera," murmured the Prince, more to himself than his companion, "and it was on that very night that I found the plan of the Castle, which gave me the clue to the entrance into the vaults. Of course, you are now aware that the object of my search was the Rane's jewels—your friend Leslie's story will have enlightened you on that point."

Gerard started.

"How do you know what my friend Leslie told me?"

The Prince smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"I could repeat to you—if I wished to do so—every word that he uttered regarding his visit to Tagipoor."

"Then it is Hassan who has betrayed me after all!" exclaimed Gerard. "What a fool I was not to have suspected him at the time. I suppose when he left me so hurriedly in Calcutta he came straight here?"

"You are right—he came here and warned me of your arrival. That is how it was we were so well prepared to receive you. Did you really think that alone, and unaided, you would be able to defy me on my own ground—do you not know that I am the present Rajah's nephew and heir, and that at my bidding thousands of men would instantly spring to arms? Verily you have been caught in the trap of your own folly."

He laughed mockingly, as if he enjoyed the idea of his companion's discomfiture, while Gerard gnashed his teeth with rage to think how completely he had been tricked by his servant. And the man had seemed so utterly devoted to his interest.

"And now I think I will bid you adieu," observed Hilliard, drawing himself upright as he spoke. "It will be a final farewell,"—and he laughed while he smoothed his moustache, and sauntered towards the door.

"Wait a moment," cried Carew, controlling himself by an effort. "If my last hour has indeed come you can hardly refuse to answer a few questions—our common humanity would make you do so much. Is Elaine well?"

The Prince seemed to hesitate before he answered. "She is quite well—in health."

"And she is your prisoner?"

"Put it so, if you like; for myself, I prefer to call her the Rajah's visitor. You understand, I suppose, that she and I are cousins? My mother was the Rane's first child, and thus half sister to Sir Richard Wyndell. Are there any other questions you wish to ask? You may do so if you will, and I will answer them, since there can be no indiscretion in talking to a virtually dead man."

Carew winced—less at the words than at the tone in which they were uttered. Nevertheless he went on with his interrogatories.

"What do you intend to do with Elaine?"

"I am not quite sure yet; but she will never return to England again. She is the very image of her grandmother, the famous white Rane who was formerly a person of great influence in Tagipoor, and the people think that a miracle has been wrought, and the Rane has returned



THE PRINCE SPOKE IN ENGLISH, QUIETLY AND NONCHALANTLY.

to earth again. You see how much more power this belief gives us. A rebellion seemed imminent some time ago, and it was even deemed possible that the present ruler would be deposed, in which case I should never have been Rajah after him, but the return of the sacred ruby and Elaine's appearance have had quite a marvellous effect on the populace, and my uncle's throne is now more secure than it ever was. So you see my visit to England was not unproductive of great good."

"Will you tell me how it was you first made up your mind to visit England?" queried Carew, who was now talking against time, while a hundred desperate ideas of escape flashed through his busy brain. If he could only take the Prince at a disadvantage it might be possible even yet to overpower him and his attendant—bound though the prisoner was.

"Yes, I will tell you, though probably you know a great deal of the story already. Certainly you know that the white Rance left Tagipoor after her husband's death, taking with her jewels of great value as well as the sacred ruby.

"Well, the Rajah who succeeded her husband was an indolent, weak-willed man, and he made no effort to recover the gems; but when he died, and was succeeded by his son—the present Rajah—many plans were made for tracing them.

"These plans failed, for it was impossible to find out where the Rance went after leaving India. About two years ago there was a rebellion, and my uncle grew frightened. The priests told him that the gods were angry, and the only way to appease them was the finding and restoration of the sacred ruby; whereupon my uncle declared that whichever of his nephews—for he has several all of whom lay claim to the throne—succeeded in bringing back the ruby should be his heir.

"Now I had had foreign tutors, and spoke English and French equally well; moreover, I had already visited Europe, and knew a good deal of European ways, so I set myself seriously to the task, and determined that I would succeed.

"I was helped by my sister Heera, who was even more ambitious than myself, and who made up her mind to come to Europe with me.

Accordingly we set ourselves to gather all the information we could concerning the white Rance, and we were assisted by a very old priest who had known her.

At his suggestion we gave him the copy of a picture which represented her as she appeared before her marriage, and this he made a point of showing to all Europeans who came to see him—for he had the reputation of great occult wisdom—in the hope that they might recognise it.

"For he said that the white Rance had been very proud of her beauty, and was never tired of having her pictures painted, and he argued that wherever she might have escaped to this weakness of hers would be sure to follow her and it was pretty certain that many portraits of her were still in existence. I believe, Mr. Carew, you visited this priest!"

Gerard made a gesture of assent. He understood now that what he had seen in the priest's dwelling had really been a picture of the white Rance.

"Well, his plan did not bring forth any practical fruits, so far as India was concerned; but I thought the idea a good one, and so I determined to try it in the big cities of Europe, on the chance of its bringing us tidings of the Rance. So at Vienna Heera and I represented ourselves as Egyptians, and got a great reputation for our skill in reading the past, and foretelling the future. I must inform you that my sister possesses that gift which is called clairvoyance, and which means that she is able to establish an influence over persons with whom she is brought in contact, so that she is frequently able to give a very accurate guess at their characters, and this gift of hers proved of great advantage to us. Nevertheless we were not able to pick up any information at Vienna, and so we moved on to Paris, where we had the pleasure of entertaining you—at least I had, for my sister was indisposed

that night, and I, disguised as a woman, took her place. You remember you saw the portrait of a girl lying on a couch, with flowers piled over her! It was a picture of the Rance, asleep."

"I have known that for some time," returned Gerard, coolly; "but you got no information from me that led you to Wyndeliff."

"No, but, oddly enough, we did from some one else that very night. It was an English artist who came in after you left, and who, directly he saw the picture, exclaimed, 'Why, that is Elaine, Lady Wyndeliff!' And then he told us that he had seen one or two pictures of her in the National Gallery in London. It seems she sat to R—," naming a celebrated painter, "for his famous picture of the poetic muse, which he afterwards presented to the English nation. After that the rest was comparatively easy. There was no longer any motive for our remaining in Paris, so we left for London the next day, and soon found out all about Elaine, the first Lady Wyndeliff. You see the name was a very uncommon one, and that helped us immensely. Besides, I employed one or two detectives who went to the village of Wyndeliff, proving beyond possibility of doubt that the white Rance had married the late Sir Richard Wyndeliff, and that at her death the famous jewels had disappeared. My object now was to get into the Castle itself, so as to obtain all my information first hand, and this was not very difficult. Sir Richard had a secretary whose mother was ill in Madeira. A telegram to this secretary, saying his mother was dying, secured his absence, and I took his place. Ah, what was that!"

The Prince turned quickly. The attendant, who had been standing near him with a drawn sword, had suddenly dropped his weapon, which fell with a clang on the stone floor.

Instantly Carew sprang forward thinking his opportunity had come.

(To be continued.)



"IT MATTERS THIS," ANDREW GORDON SAID, HOTLY, "THAT YOU BEAR MY NAME, AND I WILL NOT IT HAVE DISHONOUR'D."

A GREY DAWN.

—201—

CHAPTER XL

At first it seemed that Mrs. Walton's visit had brought a little brightness into Doris Gordon's life. The young bride returned the call, and found her neighbour as kind and friendly as she had expected; but, alas! there are two sides to every question, and seeing the love which surrounded Mrs. Walton's home, perhaps, made Doris perceive more plainly how terribly love was wanting in her own.

Then Agnes came back, and with her all the dull formality of the old life; and each day that came seemed to make Doris more weary and listless to widen the gulf which had arisen between her and her husband.

Andrew Gordon, wrapped up in his profession, had no suspicion of how his wife suffered. He never even realised that his marriage had been a mistake. He liked to see the sweet, girlish face in his home, and to hear the musical voice, which was so unlike his sister's metallic tones.

If any one had told him Doris was eating her heart out from misery he would never have believed them. She would have said surely she had as much as other women to fill up her life; his sister was perfectly satisfied and content, why could not Doris be the same?

Of course, Marjory Ward's desertion was hard on her; but then a husband was nearer than a friend.

Doris had him and his interests to consider now, and it must be better for her to be mistress of a home of her own than an unwelcome dependent on Major Ward's bounty.

As for Agnes Gordon, she thought her pretty sister-in-law a simpleton. She could not understand anyone with so little spirit or energy as Doris. Why, from the moment she got up till she went to bed the girl never did one useful thing. Andrew's house would indeed be mismanaged if his sister had deserted him.

December came in cold and frosty.

Miss Gordon told Doris she would do much better to take brisk walks than to sit huddled up over the fire; but Doris did not take the hint. She seemed so manifestly pale and out of spirits that Agnes decided there must be something serious amiss, and one day, in a kinder tone than usual, asked her if she felt ill.

"Oh, no!" replied Doris, quickly, "only I am so tired, and there is nothing to do."

"There's plenty to do if you'd only look for it, and as to being tired I can't think how you manage it for you are idle from morning to night; but I had something else to say to you this afternoon. This is the fourteenth of December, so it's time something was settled. What do you think of doing about Christmas?"

"About Christmas!" Doris repeated almost mechanically, "I had not thought."

"But it's time you made up your mind. I really think at such a season, Doris, you ought to make it up with your father and stepmother. Erieston is not so far but that you and Andrew might run down for the day (if the patients could spare him); you have been married four months now, and it is high time the estrangement was ended."

"There is no estrangement on my side," said Doris. "You know—at least, I suppose Andrew told you—how Mrs. Ward treated me?"

"But your father's at home now and your sister. You ought to hold out the olive branch. Of course no one could object to Andrew; still, I suppose, a worldly person might think you could have done better, and Major Ward had a right to be consulted."

"He had none," cried Doris, passionately; but Miss Gordon persisted.

"And there's another thing, my dear. You know it's time something was settled about your fortune. Five thousand pounds is a very nice little sum. Of course the greater part should be settled on yourself; but the use of a few hundred pounds would help Andrew to rise in his profession. If he started a carriage he'd soon be repaid

by the increased number of patients—appearance counts for so much to a doctor."

"I suppose it does," said Doris, dreamily. She longed to confess the whole truth to Agnes that instead of five thousand pounds she had not possessed a single sovereign when she became Andrew's wife; but very shame held her back.

"If you make it up with your father of course something will be decided about the money," pursued Miss Gordon; "and really it is time. This has been a dreadfully expensive half-year, and I can't think how I am to manage the Christmas bills without a little help."

There would be no help forthcoming through her. Of this poor Doris was painfully conscious; but she was too frightened of her sister-in-law to say so. In her heart she reproached her husband for exposing her to such a scene. He ought to have told his sister the truth at first.

"Well," said Agnes, cheerfully, "will you write to Major Ward to-day?"

"Not to-day, Agnes. I must speak to Andrew first."

"Andrew cannot advise you to write; he is very sensitive about money matters, and would not like to seem anxious about your fortune."

"I know, but I must speak to him first," her lips were so dry and burning she could hardly get out the words; "he made me promise not to hold any communication with Riverside without his knowledge."

It was Wednesday, the day as before mentioned sacred to Miss Gordon's visitors. Doris's head ached terribly; her nerves were in that state it was simply torture to her even to think of staying in the hideous drawing-room, trying to make conversation for people she disliked. She was safe nowhere in the house, for Agnes would not have scrupled to send for her. No, if she wished to escape she must go out and have actually left Cedar Lodge before the first caller arrived.

It was the best thing she could do, the fresh cold air would brace her nerves; if instead of a dreary constitutional, such as she took with Miss

Gordon, she went out for the whole afternoon, the change must do her good.

She dressed herself with more care than usual, thinking, a little sadly, how much older she looked than in the days when she and Marjory had all things in common.

Then she crept downstairs noiselessly, passed the drawing-room door in safety, and let herself out; another moment and she was past the gate out in the open road, and the merest chance decided her where she would spend the afternoon.

She loved music dearly, and she had heard none since she came to London. Why should she not go to the Crystal Palace? she knew from Mrs. Walton (who possessed a season-ticket) that there were concerts there every Saturday, and that there was generally music or some other entertainment every afternoon. The cost would be very trifling, and Mrs. Gordon had no lack of ready money, her husband had given her a crisp bank-note when she first came home, and she had spent very little since.

Pleasure was almost an unknown word in Agnes Gordon's vocabulary; but Doris loved pleasure dearly, little as she had had of it. To her beauty-loving, ardent temperament very small joys became delightful, and the big palace at Sydenham seemed to her when she reached it a veritable fairy land.

It was an off day, which means that there was neither concert nor dramatic entertainment, but the grand organ was to play at five, and meanwhile Doris wandered about and looked at some of the many attractions which go to make up the charm of the Crystal Palace. Finally wandering near the tropical department she espied some people taking tea at a small round table; and, seating herself at a similar one, she was soon following their example.

It was delicious tea, doubly so after the senna-like decoction Agnes was fond of pressing upon her guests.

Doris discovered that she was hungry; she ate two slices of cake and quite enjoyed her little repast.

She had just finished, when a familiar voice sounded in her ear,—

"Miss West! is it possible?"

Doris started. It was the first time since her wedding-day that she had met anyone who knew her in the old days; and then, too, Sir Lionel Maxwell could never be to her quite as other men.

She had loved him once, and though she had refused him; though she confessed to herself his love would never have survived the real story of her parentage, still a glamour hung over him making him differ from other men.

She had married a hard-working surgeon who had no time for pleasure; her lot was cast among dull, middle-class people, and she was weary to death of her surroundings.

Lionel Maxwell came to her like a shadow from the past. He had loved her once; he had asked her to be his wife. He belonged to the old world she had left. He might give her news of Marjory. All these reasons made her greeting of the Baronet far warmer than it would otherwise have been.

"Oh! Sir Lionel, I am so pleased to see you!"

"The pleasure is on my side!" he answered, cheerfully. "Have you quite finished tea?" as she received her change from the waiter. "Then, may I take a stroll with you; I have a great deal to say to you?"

Doris saw no impropriety in the request, and they joined the promenade; but, perhaps, Sir Lionel feared being recognised by some chance acquaintance, for he presently led the way to some seats in a less frequented part, and suggested they could talk so much better there than walking about.

"And I have so much to ask you," he said, impressively. "Do you know that you played us all a very shabby trick, vanishing like a shadow?"

"I could not help it; it was not my fault, Sir Lionel," nervously. "What did Major Ward say when he came home and found me gone?"

"I had rather not tell you."

"But I would rather know."

"He told me he was glad you had taken the initiative, for you and his wife got on so badly, it was quite impossible he could keep you as a member of his family. I feel like a brute for telling you, but you would have it."

"And Marjory?"

"His lip curled."

"Miss Ward has concluded an alliance with her step-mother; they are the best of friends, but it is rumoured Miss Marjory will not stay long at Erlestoun; her uncle left his property (a very extensive one) to her and his step-son provided they married each other. Mr. Fairfax is now on a visit to Riverside, and public opinion says the engagement will be shortly announced."

Then her sacrifice had been in vain, she might as well have been Lady Maxwell; she thought of Andrew with his grave face and silent ways, his days of hard work, his narrow means.

Had she done wrong in sacrificing herself for Marjory? No, something in her heart whispered her husband was a far nobler man than Sir Lionel could ever be.

"And you?" demanded the Baronet, presently; "don't you know that you are as mysterious as the Sphinx; I have heard half a dozen versions of your leaving Riverside, they are all different; and yet agree strangely at one point, that you did not go alone."

"I did not."

"And you are free no longer, you have given another all I hoped to gain?"

He spoke with a sentimental sigh. Sir Lionel Maxwell was just the sort of man to value a thing the more for having lost it.

"I am married," Doris spoke with much embarrassment; "my husband is a doctor living at Clapham."

"At Clapham?" Sir Lionel spoke as though he had never heard of that worth suburb, "and why is not Mr.—"

"Dr. Gordon" put in Doris.

"Why is he not here to-day?"

"Patients," said Doris, succinctly; "and besides, he does not care for amusement. How did you come here, Sir Lionel?"

"I have been lunching with a man at Court Royal, and turned in here afterwards for an hour, little thinking of the treat in store."

He looked at Doris, and she blushed deeply; no thought of ill came to her; Sir Lionel belonged to her past, and it was pleasant to see him once again, delightful to meet someone who lived in a world where people did not see their friends once a week and regale them with stewed tea and cornets of brown bread and butter.

"Are you going to the Beethes soon?"

"Not yet awhile; my aunt is wintering abroad, and there is nothing to take me there. I shall stay in town till after Christmas. And you?"

"Oh," and Doris laughed a little bitterly, "I belong now to a world where people live in one place all the year round, except—if they are lucky—for a fortnight in the summer."

"And do you like it?"

She parried the question adroitly.

"I was very glad to get away from Mrs. Ward. I think she hated me."

"And did she approve of Dr. Gordon?"

"I never asked her."

"A stolen march!"

"Sir Lionel," said Doris, impetuously, "you are a gentleman and will respect my secret. I can trust you with the true story of my wedding?"

"You may trust me perfectly."

"I missed the last train to Erlestoun; Mrs. Ward had taken me to Brighton and told me to meet her at the station, she says she told me the right time, but I am ready to swear it was half an hour after the train had left, and that she meant me to miss it."

"Of course she did," said Maxwell, quickly, "just like her, too; she is as spiteful a woman as ever lived."

"I had met Dr. Gordon and his sister in the afternoon," went on Doris; "he had been my uncle's assistant, and I had known him well in Scotland. He went with me to the station, and when he found the train had gone took me back

to be his sister's guest that night. He accompanied me to Erlestoun by the first train the next day. At Riverside my two boxes stood ready packed in the hall, and Mrs. Ward turned me out of the house. I had no where to go to, no one to help me, and so when Dr. Gordon proposed to me it seemed best for me to marry him."

"It was madness," cried Sir Lionel, passionately. "You with your face, your sensitive nature, tied for life to a rough suburban doctor, it was moral suicide."

"He was very good and kind," said the girl. "He knew that I was not Major Ward's daughter, but penniless Doris West; it was generous of him to marry me."

"You might have thought of others," said Sir Lionel, bitterly; "surely if you were going to marry for convenience sake I had the prior claim."

"Don't!" said Doris, sharply; "the past is past, Sir Lionel, only the present remains. I am Andrew Gordon's wife, and I only hope I may prove as good a one as he deserves."

Sir Lionel's lip curled slightly, but his tone was irreproachable.

"I am sure you will be. May I call upon Dr. Gordon and congratulate him on the treasure he has won?"

Doris could not picture Sir Lionel in the drawing-room at Cedar Lodge. What would he think of Agnes Gordon, her stewed tea and brown and white cornets of bread-and-butter?

"Thank you, but Andrew has no time for visiting, he is out all day."

"That must leave you very lonely."

"Oh, his sister lives with us. It is very rare that I am alone."

"Is she a nice child, or formed on the model of the little Wards, spoilt brats that they are?"

"Oh, she is not a child at all. Miss Gordon is older than Andrew. I don't know her age, but I think she must be nearly forty."

"And she acts as gaffer, eh? Don't look so shocked, Mrs. Gordon; but you know you are young and beautiful, and in fairy stories there is always some one old and ugly to guard the princesses."

"Only I am not a princess."

"You always were one to me," he answered, "a beautiful wandering princess."

The clock struck half-past five. Doris started, she had not meant to be so late.

"I must be going," she said, quickly rising; "there is a train from the High Level at a quarter to six if I can catch it."

"We shall catch it easily," he answered. "Oh, yes," in return to a wondering glance from Doris. "Of course I am going with you, it is much too late and dark for you to be out alone."

It would never have occurred to Andrew that his wife needed guardianship at six o'clock in the evening; but then Andrew was not used to the customs of Sir Lionel's world.

Sir Lionel took the tickets—first class, of course—and led Doris to a vacant carriage. She said nothing about the unused half of a "second return" still reposing in her pocket.

The train started almost immediately, but for a few moments both were silent.

Doris was thinking her last *à la* railway journey had been with Andrew when he brought her "home" from Brighton; it was only four months ago, and it seemed an eternity. Was it possible she was the bride of that August night?

Sir Lionel's thoughts were not pleasant ones, vain, selfish, and shallow as he might be (he was all three), he had yet loved Doris West with all the affection he had to give. He had pictured her his wife. Their first journey together, their honeymoon. Well, this was the first, and she was not his wife, but another's. She was lost to him, and she did not seem to have gained much happiness for herself. Her face was thinner and paler than it had been in the old days, and there were too many lines round her mouth.

Poor little thing! She must have a dull life of it with that doctor-fellow, and it behoved him (Sir Lionel) to do all he could to brighten it.

"When shall I see you again?" he asked, as

the train stopped at Denmark Hill, and he knew their parting could not be far off; "do you often go to the Crystal Palace?"

"I never went there till to-day."

"You might go to the Saturday concerts," he urged. "I know heaps of people who swear by them."

But Doris shook her head.

"I never go out on Saturdays; in fact, it is so seldom I can get away for long, that I do not think a season-ticket would be of any use to me."

"May I come and call on you at Cedar Lodge, or won't your gaoler approve?"

"Please don't call Miss Gordon that. I fear you and she would have very little in common."

"We shall be at Clapham directly. Don't send me away without promising that I may see you again."

She hesitated.

"Your husband has triumphed all down the line," went on Sir Lionel; "he couldn't grudge me a stray half hour of your society when he has got it all."

And sorely against her own instinct Doris promised that she would go to the Palace again on the following Monday.

Sir Lionel did not leave her at the station, he walked with her to the very gate of Cedar Lodge. It was very wrong, of course, but when the gate closed after her with its loud melancholy clang Doris felt a little as she thought a convict must do on hearing the door of the prison shut upon him.

Had her husband's house already become a prison to her? Heaven forbid!

CHAPTER XII.

THERE was a great deal of illness that winter, and perhaps that was why Andrew Gordon was less at home even than usual as the year drew to its close. He had a tired, worn look, too, as of a man who works too hard; his sister noticed it jealously, and decided that his marriage had brought him little happiness.

Doris was not blind to the change, but she ascribed it to the wrong cause—Andrew was tired of her. He had never really wanted a wife; a man so wedded to his profession ought never to have married.

The last thought was not her own, it came to her at the inspiration of Sir Lionel Maxwell; for that first meeting at the Palace was not their last, and after a little while hardly a week passed without young Mrs. Gordon seeing something of the handsome Baronet.

She meant no wrong. Doris was as innocent of real sin as a little child. She was dull, lonely and desolate. There was no sympathy between herself and Agnes Gordon. Her husband, she thought, had never cared much for her, and had soon forgotten the slight regard he had once felt. No one at Cedar Lodge wanted her; it mattered to no one there whether she was happy or miserable.

Sir Lionel had always loved her, and now that his love had changed into friendship what harm could there be in her meeting him sometimes. With him the dull, leaden hours flew by like magic. He never said a word the most particular of women could have resented. He never forgot his rôle of friend and mentor, and so Doris lulled herself into a false security.

They noticed a change in her at home. Agnes Gordon's sharp eyes saw that a new brightness had come to the fair young face. Andrew, busy as he was, saw that his wife's smiles were more frequent, and that she had lost the dull, listless expression she had had on first coming to Cedar Lodge.

And in one thing Doris had made a great mistake—her husband loved her more, not less. Those soft, brown eyes, that sweet, musical voice had crept into his heart and followed him all day in his monotonous round of toil.

Andrew Gordon loved his wife, but he never dreamed of telling her so. A grave, staid man, reserved and silent by nature, he was not skilled in the ways which win a woman's heart. Doris

was his. He trusted her implicitly; he would as soon have doubted Heaven itself as his wife's truth and purity.

It was for her sake he worked so hard; he wanted to be rich enough to provide another home for his sister-in-law, and leave Doris queen of her own demesne; there seemed to him more real love in working for her than in making pretty speeches. Alas! he did not understand a woman's heart.

"Doris looks well," he remarked one day in January when he came home to find his wife had not yet returned from an afternoon walk. "I think this cold weather suits her."

"Doris is well enough," retorted Agnes, rather snappishly; she was desperately jealous of her brother, and could not bear to see how much his wife occupied his thoughts; "but I think it is high time she made it up with her own family. Even if Major Ward does not choose to receive you as his son-in-law he has no right to keep back his daughter's dowry. I said as much to Doris one day, and urged her to write to her father, but she put me off with some idle excuse."

The time had come. Andrew Gordon had known that sooner or later Agnes must be told his wife was penniless. He hated the task, but felt he could not escape it.

"Major Ward could not keep back his daughter's dowry, Agnes; but my Doris is no child of his."

Miss Gordon stared at her brother.

"Are you beside yourself, Andrew? I am sure when you were Mr. Meredith's assistant you distinctly told me that he had two nieces, Marjory and Doris Ward."

"I told you what I, what all the world, believed; it was only when the two girls returned to the Major's own home that they learned the truth. Marjory was the only child of his first marriage. Doris was the daughter of one of Mr. Meredith's patients, who died when she was a few weeks old. The first Mrs. Ward took the baby for a few months from pure compassion, supposing her father would claim her as soon as she had outgrown infancy. He never did so, and Mrs. Ward kept her from love, and brought her up in all things as Marjory's sister."

"Not in all things," said Agnes, bitterly, "since it seems she has no fortune. She must have played her cards skillfully, indeed, to inveigle you into a marriage with a nameless, penniless girl."

A spasm of pain passed over the doctor's face.

"Agnes, remember you are speaking of my wife."

"A pretty wife, indeed, to entangle you in such a trap. Of course Mrs. Ward was quite right. Doris missed that train on purpose; she knew your foolish good nature, and guessed you would play the part of knight errant."

"Silence!" thundered the doctor, in a voice Agnes had never heard from him before; "there was no entanglement. I knew before I married her that my wife was no relation of the Wards. She signed the register as 'Doris West,' and never attempted to deceive me in the least."

"A penniless girl! Your future is just ruined."

"I think not," he rejoined, gravely, "for I have a stronger object to get on than I ever had before. As to money, men in my position do not expect a fortune with their wife, and I am well content with Doris as she is."

Agnes answered by a groan.

"I have often thought she was the most useless fine lady I ever met, and that it was as well she had money of her own, since she was sure to cost you a pretty penny, but to think of a dowryless girl giving herself such airs and graces."

"I have never seen any airs and graces," said the doctor. "Doris seems to me to have fallen in very pleasantly with our ways."

"She is terribly extravagant."

"Well, I am getting on and I shall be able to give her more as time passes. Agnes, when the practice increases—as I am sure it will do—if you find Doris such an uncongenial companion would you like a home elsewhere? I could soon afford it, and—"

"Oh, yes, cast me off for a girl who does not care a jot for you; turn me out to make room for a useless fine lady wife. That's the way of the world all over."

"There is no question of turning you out," said Andrew, gravely; "if you left here I should see that you had a home in all respects equal to Cedar Lodge. For my own part I am content for things to go on as they are, only, you must show no unkindness to my wife. You must not vent your disappointment on her because she brought me no fortune."

Agnes promised she would not do so. That mention of her leaving had subdued her wonderfully. She assured her brother she would make no change in her manner to Doris, and never mention their conversation to her. And perhaps Agnes Gordon kept that promise in the letter, but she broke it in the spirit a dozen times a day. She never said to Doris, "I know you are a penniless orphan, and I think Andrew ruined his future by marrying you." She never even told Doris she knew the truth, but she made her feel it in a hundred ways. Miss Gordon took the most wonderful fit of economy about this time, and insisted on putting down expenses in a number of petty ways. "We can't afford this now. Circumstances are so different with Andrew now that he must be very careful," and so on (of course, in the doctor's absence) till poor Doris grew almost frantic. She knew perfectly that Agnes was talking "at" her, and that the wonderful retrenchments were all needed, because Andrew had married a penniless wife. She felt humiliated.

If only there had been perfect confidence between her and her husband, if she had been able to put her pretty brown head on his shoulder and sob out her troubles, the sting of them would have gone. Andrew would have comforted her, and the episode would only have drawn them more closely together; but, alas! Doris believed her husband repented his marriage, and cared nothing for her, so she could not seek his sympathy.

The crisis in their lives was, after all, brought about by an outsider, a mere acquaintance, and one, who though a great talker, had yet not a spark of malice in her composition, and not one grain of ill-feeling towards the doctor's young wife.

Mrs. Ferrers lived near Cedar Lodge, and was a pretty frequent visitor at Agnes Gordon's "Wednesdays." A pleasant prosperous woman, she had done all in her power to push forward the young doctor, while, unlike most of Andrew's patients, she really appreciated his sister's good points, and thought Agnes Gordon a very sensible woman.

"And where is Mrs. Gordon?" she asked, when she had outstayed the other callers on the first Wednesday in February, and it was ominously near six o'clock. "I have been waiting on purpose to see her."

"Doris has gone for one of her long walks," said Miss Gordon, fiercely. "I am sorry to say she is very unsociable, and often goes out on my Wednesdays."

"She is a pretty young creature," said Mrs. Ferrers, kindly, "and perhaps we are all a little too old for her. She looked prettier than ever yesterday at the Palace, I thought."

Miss Gordon started.

"You must have mistaken someone else for Doris," she said, quickly.

"No, I am sure it was Mrs. Gordon. She sat in the stalls with a tall dark gentleman. I supposed it to be her brother, for I have seen them together at the Crystal Palace two or three times, though I have never been near enough to speak to her."

"You must have been mistaken," said Agnes, severely. "My sister-in-law knows no gentleman in London, and I am quite sure she has never been to the Crystal Palace."

Mrs. Ferrers was very quick-sighted; she was just as positive as ever that she had seen Doris and no one else; but she perceived the pretty little wife had been to the Palace unknown to her sister-in-law, and that to persist in her own statement might bring trouble on Doris, so she only said, pleasantly,—

"Well, of course you know best, so perhaps it was a case of mistaken identity. There are wonderful accidental likenesses in real life sometimes as well as in novels."

She took her leave. Agnes Gordon drew her chair a little nearer the fire and gave herself up to thought.

"Was Mrs. Ferrers right after all?"

For some time, six or seven weeks at least, Doris had taken to long solitary walks, often being absent for three hours or more. She always came home looking brighter, as though the air and exercise had done her good, but she never made any remark as to her expedition; and once, when Agnes had suggested accompanying her, she had changed her mind and not gone out. Could it possibly be that she had been to the Crystal Palace with a stranger?

Quick to think evil, Agnes decided the stranger must be an old lover, and that these secret meetings threatened misery and dishonour to her brother.

"As though it were not enough that he married her—a penniless outcast whom no one owned, she might at least have been true to him, if it had been merely out of gratitude."

All the anger, jealousy and malice which had been slumbering in Agnes Gordon's heart woke suddenly into new life. She felt she hated Doris; that she would do anything to compass her disgrace.

If only Doris were sent away the old times would come back, when she and Andrew were all in all to each other. This woman, who thought she loved her brother, was yet base enough to rejoice at the mere chance of destroying his married happiness.

Doris was later than usual. Andrew had come in from the surgery and was standing with his back to the drawing-room fire when she entered. Agnes had barely begun her recital, but she had said enough to make him troubled and indignant.

"Here is Doris to answer for herself," he said, as his wife came in. "Sit down, dear, I want to ask you something."

But something in his voice, something in the hard, stony expression of his sister's face, told Doris her secret had been revealed.

Well, she thought, proudly, she had done no wrong; they had no right to treat her like a criminal.

"Won't presently do, Andrew! I want to go and change my dress, or I shall be late for dinner."

"Dinner can wait," he said, gravely. "Tell me just this. Were you at the Crystal Palace yesterday afternoon?"

"Yes," came from his wife's lips with a ring of defiance. "I was; if you had asked me I would have told you. I made no mystery of it."

"Was it the first time you had been there?" he asked, very gravely.

"No; but I do not see that it matters to anyone how I spend my time; no one wants me here, I—"

But Andrew Gordon interrupted her. He was a hot-tempered, passionate man, though years of self-restraint had curbed his natural temperament so much that few suspected it. Now, however, fully aroused to anger, he was almost beside himself with passion. If he had not learned to love his wife dearly; if he had not learned to love his own soul, he might have been less moved.

"It matters this," he said, angrily, "that you bear my name and I will not have it dishonoured. You say you made no mystery of your goings out, and yet you leave us to hear from a stranger that you have been seen week after week in public places with—a man!"

"Of course, if you choose to listen to such scandal," began Doris, angrily, "I cannot help it. I see no harm in what I have done. I was dull here—deadly dull. No one tried to interest me or amuse me, so one day I went to the Crystal Palace to while away some of the dreary hours. I met an old friend there whom I had often seen at my father's. I mean at Major Ward's house. We had a pleasant talk together, and he asked me if I should be likely to be at the Palace again."

"And you met him," cried Andrew, "you, my

wife, whom I trusted, actually crept out of my house, time after time, to keep assignations with your lover!"

"He was not my lover," began Doris, hotly, and then she stopped abruptly. After all what else was Lionel Maxwell? In the old days he had asked her to be his wife; in the present he was always insinuating how unworthy Andrew was of her, and how gladly he would have stood in her husband's place.

"If he had been a gentleman and a man of honour he would never have so compromised you," said Agnes, sternly. "Why did he not call here and see you openly if he was only a friend?"

Andrew looked at his wife with a strange intense scrutiny.

"Tell me the truth," he said, gravely; "who is this man, and what is he to you?"

But he had gone the wrong way to work with one of Doris' proud spirit.

Alone together, with his arms about her, and the touch of his lips on hers, she might have told her husband that Lionel Maxwell was nothing in the world to her but a pleasant acquaintance; that it was only the loneliness of her life which had made her seek outdoor companionship; that if only Andrew had treated her as his wife and confidante she would have been content.

But in the presence of a third person, treated well-nigh as a criminal by her husband who assumed the rôle of judge, Doris was as hard as steel.

"You have no right to speak to me like that," she said, angrily.

"I have every right," he rejoined. "I am your husband."

"Why don't you say my gaoler?" she asked, bitterly.

"Doris, how can you speak so," cried Agnes Gordon. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"I daresay," she returned, with a strange odd sort of smile, "but the faults are not all mine. I came here a young, confiding girl, and from the very first I have been made to feel myself an interloper, taught that I was the 'one too many' in the house. No one here wanted me, no one here loved me, and if I sought kindness and sympathy elsewhere the fault is less mine than that of those who drove me to it."

Andrew rose half wearily; any ray of brightness had died out of his face, he looked like an old man worn and broken.

"We will not prolong this scene," he said, gravely. "You must see, Doris, that you have annoyed me terribly. Things cannot go on as they are; I could never trust you again. I am going out now, I have a case I must see to night. You had better think over things quietly, and I will talk to you when I return. Don't be afraid, I only want to find out what will be least painful to us both."

He went out; they heard the door close after him, then Doris looked at Agnes Gordon and spoke one bitter truth.

"This is your work," she said, slowly, as she turned to leave the room.

Miss Gordon dined alone; she was one of those women who would have meals served regularly if hearts were breaking around her. She made an excellent repast, her appetite not in the least impaired by the message that Mrs. Gordon was lying down and would not come to dinner.

Sitting alone by the fire, Agnes Gordon reviewed the position and decided what would be best from her point of view.

Of course Doris could never be trusted again; but Andrew seemed so infatuated with her that it was doubtful if he would consent to a legal separation. If young Mrs. Gordon were sent as parlour boarder to a strict school or convent for at least a year, where a rigid surveillance was kept on her movements, it was just possible that at the end of the term she might be restored to the privileges of life at Cedar Lodge, but Agnes herself would much have preferred for the offender to be permanently exiled.

They could easily tell inquirers that young Mrs. Gordon was visiting her own people, and then by the time the visit might be supposed to

end acquaintances would have grown used to the state of things.

The house was unusually quiet, or it seemed so to Agnes as she sat on alone; her brother's prolonged absence did not disturb her, she knew that a 'serious case' might mean he would be detained till morning.

A tray of cold refreshments was placed in his consulting-room before the servants retired at ten; then when the echo of their footsteps died away the strange silence settled on the house again.

Agnes tried to read, but she could not fix her thoughts, and her sister-in-law's face seemed to rise up between her and the printed page. It was strange, but she could not get Doris out of her head. Was she asleep? Had her gay, childish temperament suffered her to forget the storm in slumber?

Somehow a picture of Doris as she had seen her first that August day at Brighton seemed to haunt Miss Gordon. How pretty she had been then, how young and innocent. After all, had they been quite fair to Doris? Had Cedar Lodge been made a real home to her?

Miss Gordon roused herself from these musings with a start as a cinder fell out of the fast-expiring fire. She got up hastily and put on some coals, stirred them slightly, and seated herself again. Surely Andrew could not be much longer, why, it was not far from two o'clock.

She went to the window, raised the blind and looked out. The snow which had been threatening all day had begun to fall about seven, and now everything she could see outside was wrapped in a thick white mantle.

How cold and cheerless it looked; she let the blind fall again and sat down, surely Andrew must be here soon.

Three minutes later she heard his latch key turn in the lock; he had returned to the home she had helped to blight.

(To be continued.)

VIVIEN'S AWAKENING.

—201—

CHAPTER XVII.

It was the most thrilling scene imaginable—the daring young captain exposed in his true light before the young girl, who faced him as haughtily as an offended queen, and the timid, golden-haired creature who clung to her arm so closely in the most abject fear.

"Is this the man who so cruelly wronged you?" she repeated, pointing to her crestfallen lover with superb scorn. "Answer me at once, for I will know!"

Denial would avail him little now; and it was the captain himself who answered.

"I see it is all over between us now, Eleanor," he said, tossing his handsome head back, and in a voice equally as proud as her own. "That was one page of my darkened life that I had intended your pure eye should never scan. I have loved you, Eleanor, as few men have ever loved. I would willingly die for you if you so willed it. No matter what the world may say of me, you have found me tender and true; and I have never been wanting in the courtesy that becomes a gentleman, yet I can no longer seal my life with a living lie. Know me now as I am—Captain Marney, who has dared to love you, and who loves you, and you alone! You know the mission upon which I have just been, Eleanor; now will you come with me—or not?"

"You had better ask that question of this poor little creature whom you have so cruelly wronged." Without deigning him another look, but drawing Vivien swiftly along by her side, Eleanor Valentine swept hastily past him, almost lifted Vivien into her phaeton, sprang in beside her, and in another moment the white, sorrowful face among the trees was left far in the distance behind them.

Lumley Lister (as we shall hereafter call him) made no attempt to detain or follow them. All

in a moment his cup of happiness had been dashed from his lips. The evil of his past life had found him out.

He believed Vivien had told Eleanor of her forced captivity, and that it was to that she had so scathingly referred.

He knew he had looked his last upon the beautiful face of Eleanor Valentine. She might have forgiven him for any other offence than that of being Captain Marnsey.

And for the first time in his life, this man, whose ears had been deaf to the cries of justice, whose heart had been marble to pleadings for mercy, who had laughed law and morality to scorn, bowed his handsome head and wept over a broken love-dream.

There are natures in which pride outweighs love. He was right; Eleanor Valentine could never forgive him for being the captain of a band of notorious outlaws. She had clasped the hands of a plunderer; had listened to his tender words, and her heart had thrilled under his caresses. How her fair cheeks burned as she thought of it! burned with shame and mortification!

Vivien had been too astonished to utter a single word when Lumley Lister had appeared so unceremoniously before her, and she was too completely bewildered to clearly understand the strange mistake the young girl by her side had fallen into—believing the daring young chief to be the lover who had so cruelly deserted her.

Vivien had been too completely dazed to listen to the conversation that had passed between them.

They had reached the station, and Vivien alighted.

"Good-bye," said Eleanor, with a tearless sob. "Whenever I think of you I shall always remember that you have saved me from a fate worse than death; for if you had not drifted across my path by this time I should have been that man's wife, and when his true character should have become known to me I should have taken my own life through very shame. I will not tell you my name, nor will I ask yours," continued Eleanor; "keep that purse with its contents in welcome, for you have rendered me a service to day that gold could never repay."

If Vivien North had only known whose gold it was that she held in her hand she would have spurned it from her as though it had been a serpent's coils.

Eleanor Valentine drove slowly home. She was not the same gay, saucy young girl who had been over the same road one short hour before. Now all the sunshine seemed blotted out, and the flowers by the road-side to have lost their fragrance.

As she neared home she saw the house was in great confusion. Servants were flying to and fro with white, frightened faces, and Lady Valentine and Lilian were sitting at the window in her brother Bertram's room, sobbing bitterly. With flying steps and beating heart Eleanor quickly gained the room.

Bertram was lying upon a couch, the family doctor bending gravely over him, while Gertrude Froest, with a face pale as marble, hung over his pillow.

In a moment they led Eleanor from the room, explaining to her that Bertram's horse had thrown him, and he was conveyed to an adjacent hospital until word could be sent to Sir Gilbert Valentine; and as it was found he was not injured as seriously as was at first feared he was conveyed to his home.

As a matter of course the wedding upon which Sir Gilbert had set his heart was postponed.

"Is it retribution?" Gertrude Froest asked, bitterly, clenching her jewelled hands together, as he turned restlessly on his pillow with the name of Vivien North on his feverish lips.

"The girl is dead," she thought, triumphantly. "The man Budd did his work well. Bertram will never know that it was my doings; he shall think she died voluntarily from the cottage."

Meanwhile Vivien had entered the crowded station with the other passengers, and stepping up to the booking-office to purchase her ticket she found with dismay that her purse had been stolen.

A low cry fell from Vivien's lips as she tried to realize the terrible misfortune that had befallen her.

"What is the matter, my dear?" said a kind voice behind her; and turning around Vivien found one of the good sisters of a neighbouring seminary standing beside her, and in a few sobbing words she explained her great loss.

A crowd had commenced to gather around them, and more than one person smiled significantly as they hinted audibly that they did not believe a word of it—it was only the ruse of a pretty young girl to raise a neat little sum of money from the sympathetic passengers.

The gentle sister drew Vivien away from the idle throng, seated her, and took a seat by her side.

"You have the face of a young girl who is honest and truthful, and I believe what you say is true," she said, calmly. "Poor child! Heaven help her," she thought, "if I mistake not she is one of the poor unfortunates, cast adrift on the world—whether from folly or inexperience, ah, who can tell? I ought not to judge her. Where were you going? To your mother, I hope," said the sister, gently.

"My mother is dead," said Vivien, sobbing. "I was going to an uncle who lives but a few miles distant, and an aunt who used me very cruelly, and from whom I ran away a week ago; but I have found the great world so cold and so hard that I—I would go back to the farm again if I only had the money."

"That is right," replied the lady, earnestly. "No matter how cruel they were you were safer with them than exposed, with a face like yours, to the dangers of a great city;" and with a few kindly words of counsel she bought Vivien's ticket and saw her safely seated in the crowded train.

So engrossed was Vivien in her own thoughts she did not observe how keenly a young man sitting in a seat opposite was observing her, or see the start of surprise he gave, or hear his exclamation of amazement as she entered the train.

"I'm in luck," muttered James Walker, for it was he. "Ha, ha! I think before this trip is over I shall have the chance of paying yonder little fairy back with interest for the kiss she refused to give me the night I so gallantly showed her where the Albert Hall was. I told her we should meet again; but I little thought how soon it would be."

"I wonder where she is going! Ah! I have it," he ruminated, with a triumphant smile. "These warning letters I wrote to old Sir Gilbert and the charming Gertrude have worked like a charm."

"I'll wager five hundred pounds against a penny that Sir Gilbert raised the very deuce about the matter, and the upshot of the whole affair is Bertram Valentine, the sly fellow, has sent the little charmer away until the storm blows over."

"Heaven! what a little beauty she is, though," he muttered. "I can well understand why men went mad for one kiss from the rosebud lips of beautiful Helen of Troy when such little fairies as this live."

"Ah, I believe she has bewitched me. One thing I am fully determined upon: I shall take her from Valentine; she shall be mine—I swear it!"

It was dusk when Medhurst was reached; and although James Walker had purchased his ticket for a much farther station he arose and followed Vivien from the train, while in his fertile brain a desperate scheme, worthy of the mind of a fiend, was forming.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE scheming, unprincipled young dandy turned the collar of his travelling-cloak up high around his neck and drew his slouch hat down over his face as he stepped out of the train, lest by chance Vivien might turn around suddenly and recognize him.

Walker saw her stop and exchange a few words with a boy at the station, then start off suddenly

over the dairy-studded fields like a timid hare who scents the hounds in close pursuit.

Walker approached the lad at once.

"I say, boy," he began, carelessly, "who is that pretty young girl going over the fields there—I mean, what's her name—and where does she live?"

"I thought everyone knew pretty Vivien North," answered the boy, showing his ivory in a broad, good-natured grin; "she's old Farmer Nelson's niece, and lives over at the farm among the hills. They've got a fine place over there."

"How far is the farm from here, boy?" asked Walker, impatiently.

"A little over three miles by the carriage road. There's a short cut across the fields—that way—that makes it only about half the distance," he replied, jerking his thumb awkwardly in the direction indicated.

"Where can I hire a good fleet horse and carriage, my lad?" was Walker's next query, as he tossed the lad a coin. "I want to find a livery stable. Can you point out to me where I would be likely to find one?"

"Right around the curve of the road is a livery stable," said the boy, eyeing the stranger with a curious stare in his blinking eyes.

"And is there a chemist's herabouts?" asked Walker.

"Right around the curve of the road, sir, is a livery stable, and across the road from there is the post-office and chemist's all in one," replied the lad. "Thank'ee, sir, for the silver! I'm ever so much obliged."

James Walker strode rapidly down the road, and in a few moments he reached the livery stable indicated, and pausing a moment he read by the flickering light of a lamp—

"Thompson Brothers, Livery Stable."

"Thompson Brothers," muttered Walker, slowly: "I wonder where I have heard of them before! Ha! I remember," he cried. "I read of them in the papers! They were suspected of a robbery, but as nothing could be proven against them they were allowed to go free. Yet it was strongly suspected that the fleet-footed horses which came and went from their stable all hours of the day and night belonged to a gang of thieves in adjoining cities. Ha, ha! these men will suit my purpose admirably," he cried, exultantly. "Money will buy the very souls of such fellows as these!" he told himself, walking boldly into the office.

One glance at the two dark-browed men who rose to meet him easily convinced him that he could not have found two scoundrels so admirably suited to the purpose he had in view if he had scoured the whole world over in search of them.

It was long after eleven o'clock when Walker left the office. Meanwhile, a close carriage with two of the fleetest black horses in the stable, stood hitched and awaiting his orders.

One of the brothers sat in the seat quietly holding the reins, while upon the seat beside him lay a thick dark cloak, two masks, and a large sponge, as though these articles were intended to be ready for use at an instant's warning and he desired them near at hand.

"Have you the dark lantern with you?" asked Walker, critically surveying the outfit; "everything else seems all right as far as I can see."

The man nodded assent, and Walker smiled approvingly.

"Drive to the corner and wait for me there," said Walker. "I will soon join you and have all the needful with me."

The carriage rolled rapidly away, but both vehicle and horses might have been padded with rubber, as no sound of hoofs or wheels broke the stillness of the midnight hour.

Meanwhile Walker crossed over to the apothecary shop and entered hurriedly. A sleepy-looking boy was in attendance behind the counter.

"I wish to purchase some chloroform, boy," said Walker, nervously. "Give me an ounce or so of it. I want it strong and powerful."

"Can't sell it without a prescription from the doctor!" said the boy crossly—angry enough at being disturbed at that hour of the night.

James Walker bit his lips fiercely to keep back

the imprecation that sprung to them, and a dangerous fire leaped into his eyes.

"What have you got, then, to stop the ravages of a raging headache?" he demanded, quickly. "Laudanum or headache mixture will do."

The honest shop-boy, all unconscious of the trick of his wily customer, turned to inspect the row of druggist's sundries on the shelf behind him.

Improving his opportunity, Walker quickly seized a large jar of chloroform which stood on the counter, filled a good-sized bottle to the brim, and corked and thrust it into his breast pocket unobserved. At that moment the lad turned.

"We have some headache mixture," said the boy, turning clumsily around, his eyes resting with an ill-concealed, admiring stare on the peculiar opal ring which Walker wore.

"Well, I suppose that will do," replied Walker, hurriedly. "You may put up a dose as quick as you can. I want to catch the midnight train. It wants just five minutes to that time now."

He paid for the mixture, thrust it into his pocket, and hurried out of the shop, smiling as he thought how cleverly he had outwitted the boy. The boy was fully awake by this time.

"I wonder what is this peculiar odour I smell!" he soliloquised, slowly. "How strange! It is just like chloroform! That sweet, peculiar odour. Ha! It is chloroform, and the counter is wet with it. How does that happen when the cork has not been out of that bottle for months? And, by George!" he cried, scratching his head thoughtfully, "that bottle was nearly full. I'll bet my life that chap has actually stolen some when I refused to sell it to him! W-h-e-w! I thought he was mighty anxious to get the mixture! I would know him anywhere by that ring," he muttered, slowly; "and he's up to some mischief, I'll warrant. I'll say nothing to anyone about this, but I'll keep my eyes open, for I'll bet there's mischief afoot somewhere. I'll do more: I'll shadow him."

Meanwhile Walker had joined the man in the carriage.

"It's all right; I have it," he whispered, hurriedly, taking his seat inside the coach. "Now, my good man, I want you to earn that fifty-pound note I gave you by driving over to Melrose Farm with the utmost possible despatch."

At that moment Vivien North still lingered in the fields, little dreaming of the danger that menaced her, or that the coils of fate worse than death were closing in around her.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was night. In the kitchen of the old farmhouse sat Farmer Nelson and his wife, discussing Vivien's strange disappearance of a week before.

"I always thought no good would come of her roaming about the fields like a wild gipsy for hours at a time," declared Mrs. Nelson, stitching away vigorously at the garment she held in her hand. "And now she has run away at last, and I say it serves you right, too, for giving her her own way so much. No good comes of poor girls like her wanting to play the fine lady. Vivien North was too romantic—just like her unfortunate mother was before her. Too much love-dreaming and nonsense go with those pretty faces."

"I can't think where the child could possibly have gone," interposed the farmer, dejectedly. "I always thought I was doing my duty by little Vivien in providing her such a good home. I never once dreamed that the child was unhappy here," he sighed. "I do miss her so!"

"Don't make an old fool of yourself, Tom Nelson," cried his wife, emphatically. "It was that miserable girl's own fault if she was unhappy here. She was too fond of decking herself out in finery, always trying to make herself look gayer than our Clara. Miss her, indeed! The Lord knows I am glad to be rid of her," she added, with spiteful emphasis.

A twig snapped beneath the window, and in the faint starlight a white, wistful face peered

earnestly into the room from among the climbing-red roses. A moment later a shadow crept across the threshold, and a voice sobbed out brokenly:

"Uncle Tom—Aunt Julia, I have come back to you. Oh, pity and forgive! If you could me, I shall fall down and die at your feet!"

Both Mrs. Nelson and her husband were on their feet in a flash.

"It's Vivien's spirit!" gasped the farmer's wife, in terror. "Look at the tangled hair and white, horrible face! It's a ghost, Tom! For Heaven's sake let's both run!"

"I'm no ghost, Aunt Julia," sobbed Vivien, advancing toward the centre of the room near where the horror-stricken woman stood. "I'm your unhappy niece, Vivien."

"So you are really Vivien North, eh!" retorted the irate farmer's wife, her rising anger taking the place of her momentary fright. "Where have you been for the past week? I want to know where you have been, I say. Your dress is bedraggled with mud, and we would be disgraced for life if anyone hereabouts saw you. I ask you again, Vivien North, what's the meaning of all this?"

"I—I cannot tell you, Aunt Julia," sighed Vivien, bitterly. "Only be kind to me, and forget that I ever went away."

"Do you hear that miserable girl!" cried Mrs. Nelson, sharply. "Do you hear that girl, Tom, I say! She slips off in the dead of night, the Lord only knows where, and we—a dragging the lake, and scouring the whole country for her; and now, after a week, she comes scollally back, and asks us to forget the disgrace she has brought on us; and worst of all, insults us by telling us not to ask where she has been! I never struck the girl in my life yet, but, I declare, I have a great notion to beat the truth out of her. I shall look into this thing, you can depend upon that, ungrateful girl!"

"You may kill me, if you choose, Aunt Julia," sighed poor Vivien, with a gasping, tearless sob, as she sunk down on the floor in a little heap, "but I will not—oh, I cannot—reveal to you the dark secret of the past week."

"Is there a lover at the bottom of it?" cried the angry woman, leaning down and fairly hissing the words in her startled ear. "Answer me, girl; has love anything to do with this disgraceful affair?"

"No; no one loves me," muttered Vivien, hoarsely. "I have no right to love anyone, Aunt Julia. My poor heart is sorely bruised! Heaven never intended anyone to love me!" she added, wearily.

"Then you must tell me where you have been," declared the farmer's wife, suspiciously. "You can't make me believe the moon's made of green cheese. It's just such pink-and-white baby faces as yours that do all the mischief in the world. You can't stay under this roof till you make a clean breast of it."

The beautiful golden head was bent low before her. Then Vivien turned her eyes piteously to Farmer Nelson, who stood by in the most intense amazement, regarding the scene in a dumfounded, helpless manner.

"Forgive me! Oh, won't you, please, Uncle Tom, and take me back!" sobbed Vivien, distractedly, holding out her little white hands toward the bluff, honest-hearted old man. "You have been kind to me all my life. Don't desert me now, for I have no one but you to look to; if you turn from me I shall die at your feet!"

"It would be the best thing you could do," retorted Aunt Julia, curtly. "You may as well realize, first as last, that you can't stay under this roof. Go back where you've been for the last week!"

"Do be merciful and forgive me!" cried the poor, tortured child. I have nowhere to go, Aunt Julia. Heaven has shut me entirely out from its mercy, and forgotten me too!"

"Well, that's just what I intend to do," cried the heartless woman, fiercely grasping the frightened girl by the shoulder, and fairly raising her to her feet. "I want you to leave this house the same way you came. Go where you've been during the past week," she repeated, tauntingly; "but if you've got a spark of

decency left about you, you'll keep shy of the neighbours, and don't let 'em see you, or there will be worse stories afloat than there are now."

"Surely you don't mean to drive me from the shelter of your roof out into the cold, bitter world again! Oh, Aunt Julia, you do not, you cannot mean it!" cried Vivien, faintly, a death-like chill creeping over her.

"Don't you understand plain English when you hear it?" demanded Mrs. Nelson, grimly. "Take yourself off at once!"

"Now, Julia, wife, don't be too hard upon poor little Vivien," interposed the old farmer, in an unsteady voice. "You've gone far enough. You must remember, wife, Vivien's young and thoughtless. I do not believe she's done anything wrong. Have you, child?" he asked, with intense earnestness.

Vivien tried to answer, but the words died away on her white lips, making no sound; and she gazed at him with a world of pitiful entreaty in her childish blue eyes.

"There!" cried Mrs. Nelson, shrilly and triumphantly. "Don't you see, Tom, she doesn't deny it! Anyone might think you were born yesterday; you're too innocent to live, and you've no more sense than that old cat on the rug. I'm a sharp woman; I can see into things at once. I knew no good would come of her, and I boldly said so, too, the day that the raven flew past and pecked at her cheek, for ravens are ravens. I tell you, and bad signs always come true. She can stay here only on one condition," declared the farmer's wife, grimly, in a tone her husband dared not gainsay; "and that is by telling the plain, unvarnished truth as to where she has been since she left us. Nothing else will do; I shall keep up the respectability of this house, and don't you interfere, Tom."

And he knew his wife meant what she said. "Oh! I pray you not to be so cruel, Aunt Julia!" sobbed Vivien, rocking herself to and fro. "If you were to kill me, I could not—I dare not tell you. Even in death the dark secret would be buried with me. Ask anything else of me, and I will gladly do it!"

"Then you know the alternative!" cried Mrs. Nelson, with flashing eyes. "There's a guilty look on your face, Vivien North, and I shall think the worst of you that is possible to think, unless you make a clean breast of this miserable mystery and clear it up straightway."

"How can I tell her," thought Vivien, wildly, "that I am a victim to the curse of love; that he whom I trusted so blindly deceived me more cruelly than death—cast me adrift on the great ocean of life, without the least mercy or pity for my youth, my innocent, broken heart, or my blasted hopes!"

Could she tell her that she had spent those days at that fairy cottage home which the cruel deceiver had never come to share, and that, although appearances were against her, she was as free from any taint of sin as the snowy blossoms nodding their pale petals against the window-pane!

"Didn't you hear what I said, Vivien North?" repeated her irate aunt, menacingly, tightening her hold painfully upon the delicate white shoulder. "If you don't choose to tell where you've been, leave the house instantly."

Poor Vivien knew better by past experience than to appeal to her helpless old uncle when his wife "laid down the law," as she called it.

"As it is night now, you will at least let me stay until morning!" pleaded Vivien, mournfully. "I'm so afraid of the darkness, and it has commenced to rain, too. In the morning I'll go quietly away and I shall always remember that you did not drive me out into the fury of the bitter storm."

A harsh, grating laugh answered her.

"Afraid of the storm and the darkness? You plead well," she sneered, maliciously. "You weren't afraid to sneak out of the house at night a week ago, were you! and it was midnight then, too. Nor were you afraid of disgracing us all when the news of your disappearance leaked out among the gossiping neighbours. My poor Clara will never dare to hold her head up among 'em again."

"It's a good thing poor Clara is in Hartford,

where she tries to mingle in the best society. Poor dear, she hasn't heard of your escapade. The very shame of it will kill her. Not that she's got any too much love for you, but she's got what you have none of, family pride, that she'd die to keep up."

"I never meant to disgrace you," said Vivien, humbly. "I meant to be such an honour to all of you. I wanted you to be proud of me."

"Depend upon it you shall not disgrace us any more," said Mrs. Nelson, grimly. "Go!" she cried, pointing to the door, "and never let me look upon that pink-and-white baby face of yours again. If you persist in staying about here I shall have you arrested, and then you will be forced by the law to clear up this dark mystery. The secret will be wrung from your lips whether you are willing or no. They have detectives to ferret such things out."

The farmer's wife never forgot the wild, startled cry that broke from Vivien's white lips. "Then let me leave at once, Aunt Julia," she said. "Let me go anywhere—anywhere away from here. I am young yet," she wailed, sharply, "perhaps in time I can atone for it all. Man may forget, but perhaps Heaven may forgive me."

"Good-bye, Uncle Tom," she sobbed, holding out her little fluttering white hands toward him. "May Heaven bless you for the kindness you have always shown me!"

"Good-bye, Aunt Julia," she said, turning to the woman who had shown her so little mercy in the hour of her bitterest sorrow. "You have not been kind. You have driven me away to live or to die, as Heaven sees fit, but I forgive you; some day you may regret this action. When anyone mentions the name of your unhappy niece Vivien North to you it is my prayer that you will always try to think of me kindly and at my best."

And without another word Vivien turned and fled out into the darkness and the night. In the distance she could hear the plaintive murmur of the waves as they beat drearily against the shore.

Vivien turned from the lake with a shudder. "Not that way—not that way," she sobbed. "It was there I first listened to Bertram Valentine's fickle vows of love. It was there he clasped me in his arms, murmuring: 'Vivien, my darling, my first and only love, will you be my wife?' His wife, oh, dear Heaven!" she cried, bitterly, struggling on through the terrible storm and the darkness. "May Heaven forgive him for the falsehood that stained his lips."

She flung herself down in all the storm and hid her white, despairing face in the long, daisy-studded grass, weeping for the overthrow of her hope and her love, and the desolate young life that lay in ruins around her, as she never wept before.

The rain, like pitying angels' tears, dropped softly down upon that golden head buried among the silent daisies, but Vivien did not even heed it.

She stretched out her white hands through the darkness, crying out to her lost love that life was too hard to bear without him.

But such a passionate burst of grief is the soonest spent.

"I will learn to forget him," she cried, raising her white face to the dark sky "or teach myself to think of him with a desperate, burning hatred that will far outweigh my love. Let me cast him out of my poor shattered heart as he cast me out of his, without one regret. They shall not any love broke Vivien North's heart."

"I will not fling myself into the dark waters of the lake. I will cling to life with but one aim: I will bring down Bertram Valentine's life as low as he has brought down mine. My wrongs shall be righted; I will tell them to the whole wide world, and denounce him for blighting my young life so cruelly. Oh, the madness, the folly of trusting too blindly to love!"

Was it fancy, or did someone call her name in a low, cautious whisper?

Vivien raised her head from the long wet grass and listened. A man's rapid footsteps were surely approaching, and a voice that was strangely

familiar was calling eagerly in that same cautious tone.—

"Vivien, Vivien, where are you?"

CHAPTER XX.

VIVIE raised her head from the daisy-studded grass and listened. Was someone calling her name, or was it only the wind sighing among the branches of the trees overhead, or perhaps some night bird's cry?

She sat quite still, listening intently. It was no delusion; footsteps were rapidly approaching, and again she heard a low, cautious voice whispering her name.

What could anyone want with her? Had her aunt repented of sending her out into the cold, bitter world in the storm and the darkness, and sent someone after her to bring her back?

"I am here!" cried Vivien, pushing the damp golden hair back from her lovely white face. "What do you want with me?"

The dark figure approached with long, swinging strides, and in another moment it had reached Vivien's side.

Flinging back his dark cloak, the rays of the lantern which he had so carefully concealed up to the present moment were flashed into her wondering, tear-stained face. It lighted up the wicked, leering, triumphant face bending above it.

With a low cry of abject terror Vivien recognized at a glance the persecutor who had so rudely torn the veil from her face while showing her the way to the Albert Hall, and who had so impudently demanded the payment of a kiss.

The memory of the defiant threat he had uttered preyed upon her mind ominously, as Leigh's strong hand had thrust him back.

His prophetic words still rang painfully in her ears with an undefined horror that chilled the blood in her veins. Those words were,—

"We shall meet again, and when we do, beware!"

No cry broke from the girl's pallid lips as she gazed up into the relentless face of her foe, upon which the flickering light of the lantern gleamed. Even the wild, pleading prayer to Heaven seemed to freeze on her lips.

"I see that you recognise me, my dear," he said, with a low, mocking bow. "I told you we should meet again, and it seems to me I have put in an appearance at a very opportune moment. I was just in time to see your loving aunt, as you called her, turn you from her door."

He paused a moment, but no sound issued from her trembling lips. She was looking wildly about her, and he knew that she was measuring her chances of darting away from him and escaping into the impenetrable darkness beyond.

The grasp upon her slender white arm tightened.

"You cannot escape me this time," he said with a taunting laugh. "You are wholly in my power; you must come with me."

"I am an unprotected girl," she gasped, faintly; "and if you have any mercy, any pity in your heart, you will go away and leave me, and Heaven will surely bless you for it."

"Do you see those stones beside you?" he answered, angrily. "Well, you might as well plead to them for mercy, as you call it, as to waste your pleading upon me. I have vowed that you shall be mine, and I never break a vow. You are a fool to take Valentine's desertion of you to heart like this. When one lover throws you over find another. You will find plenty of lovers while your beauty lasts. A face like yours is a fortune. Why, the first moment my eyes fell upon your pretty face I was madly in love with you, and—"

"Stop!" cried Vivien, bitterly. "Do not add insult to injury. I wonder that Heaven does not strike you down dead at my feet for your cruelty to a helpless orphan girl who has never wronged you!"

"Heaven strike me dead!" he repeated, tauntingly. "What a most horrible idea! This is rather rich," he added, half aloud. "How all

the college fellows would taunt me if they knew that I, James Walker, one of the best catches in London, was repulsed like this by a simple country girl who hasn't a place to put her pretty little head into. Ha! ha!"

The novelty of the situation rather piqued him. He had assured himself as he saw Mrs. Nelson turn Vivien from the door that she would be only too glad to accept his protection at this particular moment.

She had forgotten all her terrible sorrow—forgotten the cold, drizzling rain falling about her; she remembered only the cool, cutting sarcasm of this man's words, that "she must go with him."

How dared he address her so? It was monstrous! Her eyes flashed fire and the hot colour surged across her face in a burning, flaming torrent as she stood facing her pitiless persecutor with all the dignity of an outraged queen.

"Go away and leave me to myself," she panted, struggling to free herself from his strong, firm hold, "or Heaven's vengeance will surely fall upon you! If you had a heart that could be touched by my woe I would fall on my knees at your feet and beg you to go away."

Her eyes filled with tears and her voice quivered piteously.

For an instant the hard mocking light died out of James Walker's wicked eyes; it was not in human nature to look upon that beautiful, pleading face unmoved.

A sudden impulse that he could never wholly account for stole into his sin-hardened heart and changed his purpose.

"Vivien," he said, hoarsely, attempting to draw her into a closer embrace, "if I were to ask you to marry me this very night—this very hour—would you do it and come with me? I never offered marriage to any girl before; but you have made me love you, little Vivien, with a love such as I never experienced before. I am furthest; will you marry me at once and return to London with me! The past shall be a dead letter between us."

"No," she cried, faintly, still struggling to free herself from his detaining grasp. "I would die before I would marry you!"

"Why?" he asked, angrily, in a hoarse, sneering voice.

"You are not an honourable gentleman," she gasped, recoiling shudderingly still further from him, "and I do not love you—I loathe you!"

Vivien had not been wise to enrage her captor thus.

"Honour!" he cried, tauntingly. "How dare you prate of honour—you whom Bertram Valentine tired of in a week and then flung you off! Do you think the world would forgive you if it knew of that week spent in London? Yet you were not Valentine's wife."

She held up her little white fluttering hands with a wailing, piteous cry that the angels up in heaven must have heard and wept over. He was taunting her to the verge of madness.

"I did not know—I believed I was his wife," sobbed Vivien, incoherently. "I did not know that men's lips could utter falsehoods that were more cruel than death itself to the one who trustingly believed in them."

A low, taunting laugh was her only answer.

"I will spend my whole life in trying to atone for that one action of going with Bertram," she sobbed. "I did not wilfully do wrong; and, perhaps, in the years to come, Heaven will forgive me and man may forget, because I was 'more sinned against than sinning.' I loved and believed him, and trusted him so!"

Never did good and evil fight such a terrible battle for a heart as the momentary struggle that went on in James Walker's breast. He was tempted to turn away and leave her. He had never known a whim that was not fulfilled, a wish that was not gratified. A wild, passionate love for Vivien had seized him, and her very refusal of him had fanned the mad flame a thousand-fold.

"You shall be mine, and I shall make you love me!" he cried. "Remember, I have offered to make you my wife, and you have scornfully refused me—you who have one of the darkest of

blote upon your name, and which, in the eyes of the world, will strike your name forever from the list of honourable women. Yet, for all this, I love you more madly than ever, and I swear that you shall be mine by fair means or foul. It might have been better had you temporized with me, and taken up my offer of marriage. A worse fate than that of being my wife may be in store for you. Remember," he added, tauntingly, "you are at my mercy!"

"It is not true!" cried Vivien, frantically, falling upon her knees. "I am at the mercy of Heaven. It will find some way to save me from your hands. It takes care of the wandering, homeless birds, and surely it will take care of me, its child!" she wailed out sharply, lifting her white, agonized face to the dark, cloud-darkened sky above her.

"I shall waste no more useless words upon you!" cried the man, angrily. "You shall be mine, little Vivien—it is your fate. You might as well try to beat back the waves of the mighty ocean with your frail white hands as to resist your fate."

In a single instant he caught the long, thick cloak which he carried, and in a twinkling he had thrown it over Vivien's head, and despite her terrible struggles and her piteous cries for help, he lifted her in his strong arms, and bore her triumpantly to the spot where the coach and the dark-browed, sinister coachman stood in waiting.

(To be continued.)

TWO BROTHERS.

(Continued from page 369.)

Kitty tried to keep the house perfectly quiet that he might obtain some rest, but precisely at eleven came the expected visitor, and his sharp high-pitched voice penetrated the thin walls and effectually aroused the sleeper overhead.

The interview that took place between Ernest Lambert and his visitor was a short and decisive one. It could hardly have pleased the latter, for the jaunty, confident air he had worn on arriving changed to one of vexation and profound disappointment before he went away.

He had scarcely left the house when Adelaide sought Dick, in a state of real alarm about her husband.

"He is up and dressed," she said, piteously, "although he is almost too ill to stand. I wish you would go to him, Dick, for he talks so wildly that I am almost afraid of him. He declares that he has been tracked, and that there is someone here waiting to take him in custody. Do you think the trouble has affected his mind?"

"No, he is only excited," said Dick, reassuringly. "I will go to him, and you had better stay downstairs with Kitty."

Dick found his brother pacing restlessly up and down the room. His bloodshot eyes, parched, feverish lips, and beard of three days' growth, bore mute witness to the upheaval that had taken place in his life, and the mental torture that was consuming him.

"Hart is below, he has tracked me to this place," began Walter, turning fiercely upon the other. "You cannot deceive me, Dick; I should recognize that rasping voice of his anywhere. I must get away at once, or it will be too late."

"Suppose you go down and try to come to terms with him?" suggested Dick. "He may be less difficult to manage than you think for."

"The utmost I can do is to obtain a few days' respite in which to make good my escape," said Walter, despairingly. "I must put him off for the present with vague replies, if he is not too keen to be thus hoodwinked. Will you see him for me, Dick? You, who have done so much for me already."

"No, I think you had better see him yourself," replied his brother; and Walter

Hamilton went slowly downstairs after him, swaying to and fro as he went like a drunken man.

When he entered the sitting-room the ferret-faced, red-whiskered lawyer that he had expected to see was not visible. Only a grey-haired old man, whose agitation seemed to equal his own, stood by the window awaiting his arrival.

"Are you Mr. Hart's representative?" inquired the ruined merchant, hoarsely.

"No," said the other, quietly. "He has been here but I have refused to give him any information with regard to the trust-money, neither would I recognise his right to interfere in the matter which concerns you and myself alone. I am Matthew Hart's old friend, Ernest Lambert."

Brought there suddenly face to face with the man he had wronged so cruelly Walter Hamilton stood before him speechless, unable to utter a word in his own defence.

Dick had never chanced to mention his wife's maiden name to his brother, and the latter was unaware of the relationship existing between Dick and Ernest Lambert.

"The money would have been useful to me, very useful," continued the old actor, "since I am dependent upon my child and her husband for the common necessities of life. But since you have misappropriated it I am willing to pardon you for their sake, and to forego all claim upon you."

"Who are they? and why do you spare me on their account?" said Walter Hamilton, in a bewildered tone.

"Kitty, my only child, is your brother Dick's wife," explained the other. "He has been a good son to me, and I have promised him that I will keep the whole affair strictly secret. From me at least you have nothing to fear, Walter Hamilton."

The astonished and guilty man strove in vain to express his gratitude for the clemency and forgiveness thus held out to him.

The various emotions of surprise, remorse, humiliation and relief that swept over his worn frame were more than he could bear, and he fell fainting at the feet of the man who had brought him this great deliverance.

Little more remains to be said about the Hamiltons. When Walter Hamilton recovered from the long illness that followed close upon the trying scene already recorded he found his creditors inclined to be lenient and forbearing, thanks to the good name he had previously borne in commercial circles.

When he set up in business again on a smaller scale he insisted on Dick, to whom he owed a boundless debt of gratitude, becoming his partner. By degrees, as the new firm flourished and assumed larger proportions under the joint control of the two brothers, Walter contrived to pay back the entire sum of which he had dishonestly deprived Ernest Lambert, and the actor was thus rendered quite a rich man in his old age.

Kitty and Adelaide are very good friends. Her husband has informed the latter what they both owe to Dick and his wife, and she feels even more drawn towards them because she cannot forgive the Vernon family for the coldness and neglect they displayed towards her in the hour of adversity.

It pleases her to introduce Kitty into good society, and to snub her own relatives whenever she gets a chance of doing so.

Adelaide cares just enough for her husband, whose character has undergone a considerable change for the better, to render a life spent in his society not altogether unpleasant. Some persons are incapable of anything more in the way of affection, and Adelaide Hamilton is one of them.

Dick and Kitty are very happy in their married life. They may, indeed, be looked upon as wedded lovers, since the love that served to keep them faithful to each other under circumstances of great temptation but widens, and deepens, and gathers fresh strength with the years that come and go so swiftly.

[THE END.]

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FACETIE.

WEATHER: "How do you find things up your way?" Teaser: "By hunting for them."

HE: "I would kiss you if I thought no one would see me." SHE: "Shall I close my eyes?"

DOMBEY: "When your wife gets angry won't she speak to you?" Captain Outtie: "She won't do anything else."

OLD LADY (in a shoe shop): "Have you felt slippers?" Shop Boy (solemnly): "Yes, ma'am, many a time."

HUSBAND: "I think you'd better save that money for a rainy day." Wife: "But on a rainy day I can't go shopping."

YOUNG HUSBAND (to nurse): "What's this?" "Two of 'em, sir—twins." "Jove! What am I to do? I say, nurse, can't I take my pick?"

A LITTLE girl recently asked her mother: "Mother, what part of heaven do people go to who are good but not agreeable?"

VISITOR: "Sure, Bridget, are you brushing out the hall?" Bridget: "Nay, my lord; I'm just a brushing out the dust, and leaving the hall behind."

HOBSON: "I understand your daughter is taking great pains with her singing." The Poor Father: "'Taking' is not the word. 'Giving' is more like it."

HELEN: "And he actually kissed you! Why didn't you scream?" Henrietta: "How silly you are! How can one scream when one's lips are in a kissing position!"

"That was rather a sensible observation of mine, don't you think?" Miss Becky Sharpe: "Why, certainly. Didn't you notice the look of surprise on my face?"

LENA: "Fred didn't blow his brains out because you jilted him the other night; he came over and proposed to me." Maud: "Did he! then he must have got rid of them in some other way."

SARCASTIC CUSTOMER: "Waiter, how long have you been in this establishment?" Waiter: "Six weeks, sir." Sarcastic Customer: "Then you were not here when I ordered that beef-steak. Excuse me."

SMITH: "I say neighbour, I don't want all your old cans and boots and things thrown over in my yard." Jones: "You haven't got 'em all; I divided equally with my neighbour on the other side."

JACK: "Let me shake your hand, dear boy; this is one of the happy days of your life." George: "You're too precious, old man; I am not to be married until to-morrow." "That's what I say. This is one of the happy days of your life."

INTERESTED PASSENGER (on board ship): "For a man who has never been to sea before you seem to have got the theory of navigation down pretty fine." The Other Passenger (suddenly growing pale): "Yes—I'm afraid—I'm not—going to keep it down!"

MRS. SLIMSON: "My little boy has been very wicked to-day. He got into a fight and got a black eye." The Rev. Dr. Drowsie: "So I perceive. Willie, come into the other room, and I will give you a little lecture." Willie: "You'd better go home and lecture your own little boy. He's got two black eyes."

"Wise men hesitate; only fools are certain," remarked a man to his wife a few evenings ago, when she was arguing a point with him. "I don't know about that," she said, testily. "Well, I'm certain of it," he replied, so emphatically that she laughed in his face, and he has been wondering ever since what she thought was so funny about it.

JACKY (just back from his first day at school): "Oh, school is a jolly place, Aunt Maud. I was never so happy in all my life!" "You'll like it even better to-morrow, Jacky!" "To-morrow! Have I got to go again to-morrow?" "Why not, since you are so happy there?" "Ah, yes—but I don't want to make a habit of it, you know!"

Two young swells, seated in the stalls of a theatre, commenced to chaff and annoy the drummer of the band. The drummer, a rather elderly man, was silent for some time, but at last turned to them, and in a voice loud enough for the audience to hear, said: "Excuse me, but do not interfere in business. Be just. How would you like me to come into your master's shop and annoy you when you were measuring out tape?"

MISS DE PINK: "Oh, mother, that reminds me. The other day I was riding in a car when that wrinkled old lady came in, and it's a fact that Mr. De Smart, who didn't know me at that time, and didn't even see me, jumped right up and offered the old lady a seat. Wasn't that noble?" Mrs. De Pink (serenely): "He did not know you at that time, but I happen to be aware that he has long known the old lady. She is the grandmother of one of the prettiest and richest girls in the city."

"CAN you tell me what sort of weather we may expect next month?" wrote a subscriber to the editor. He replied as follows: "It is my belief that the weather next month will be very like your subscription to this paper." The subscriber wondered for an hour what the editor was driving at, when he happened to think of the word "unsettled." He forwarded a post-office order at once.

UNCLE SELFMADE: "I am tired of these encyclopedias—tired and sick of 'em. I paid £18 for the set of 'em, and I'd sell 'em for ten shillings." Niece: "Why, uncle, what is the matter with the encyclopedias?" Uncle Selfmade: "Matter? Why, I want to know something about the Cæsars, and I can't find a word on the subject. The encyclopedia ignores the whole lot of 'em." Niece: "Have you looked, uncle?" Uncle Selfmade: "Looked! Of course I have looked. I've been through every page of the 's."

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SOCIETY.

PRINCESS LOUIS OF BATTENBERG is still in Russia, on a visit to her sister, the Czarina.

It is probable that the Hereditary Prince Alfred (who is now with his regiment at Potsdam) will come to England to represent the Duke and Duchess of Coburg at the Royal wedding.

AFTER spending their honeymoon at Sandringham Prince Charles and Princess Maud will go to Cowes, and next month are to accompany the Prince of Wales to Copenhagen.

COUNTESS VON ERBACH-SCHONBERG, only sister of Prince Henry of Battenberg, will come to England next month on a visit to the Queen and Princess Beatrice, and is to spend several weeks at Osborne and Balmoral.

WITHIN easy reach of the bed in the Queen's saloon carriage is a handle on the floor, by pulling up which Her Majesty is able to apply the brakes to the whole train at any moment.

THE Queen makes a special study of the weather, the crops and the markets. Her Majesty raps her favourite weather-glass every morning before giving orders for her daily drives. She takes but little breakfast during hot weather, but is fond of ripe fruit.

It is rumoured that in September the Empress Frederick will be the guest of the King and Queen of Denmark for a week at Fredensborg Castle, her visit being arranged to take place when the Emperor and Empress of Russia, the Dowager Empress, and the Prince and Princess of Wales are staying there. The Empress Frederick will be accompanied to Denmark by Prince and Princess Frederick Charles of Hesse.

THE German Empress has given up her intended "cure" at Kreuznach, and is spending the next six weeks at Schloss Wilhelmshöhe, near Cassel, with her children. Wilhelmshöhe was the seat of the Electors of Hesse, and the Emperor Napoleon was located there during the autumn of 1870. The Schloss (a huge building in the form of a semi-circle) is superbly decorated and furnished. The extensive and beautiful grounds are famous all over Germany for their temples, fountains, and cascades.

THE Prince of Wales will leave Marlborough House for the Season on the 27th inst. His Royal Highness has been invited to be the guest of the Duke of Richmond and Gordon at Goodwood during the race week, but it is probable that he will stay on board the *Osborne* in Portsmouth Harbour, and go each day of the meeting by special train to Chichester and then coach it. The Prince and Princess have arranged to arrive at Cowes on the evening of Friday, the 31st inst., and they are to stay in the Solent for about a fortnight. After that the Prince of Wales is going to Homburg, and the Princess of Wales will go to Copenhagen.

PRINCESS MARGARET and Princess Victoria Patricia of Connaught have recently had made up pretty toilettes in silk spotted veiling, trimmed with narrow velvet ribbon. The skirt is cut in circular shape, being arranged in three gores, and having the hem outlined with a double row of trimming. The bodice is mounted to a fitted lining in four sections, the back being arranged in a box pleat from neck to waist, while the fronts are in the crossover style, the right front fastening at the left side across the waist, and folding back from shoulder to waist with large pointed revers, trimmed with three rows of trimming, interlined with muslin, and lined with the fabric, a single row out lining the left front. The crossover fronts open upon a gathered chemise front of surah, the fulness being arranged upon the lining. It fastens at the back underneath the box-pleat, the latter being cut only on the left side of the back. The sleeves are mounted to a fitted coat lining, very full at top, tight fitting from elbow to wrist, three rows of the trimming completing the latter; a double row of trimming with long bows on either side of the waist, and two rows of narrow moire outside the collar.

STATISTICS.

CHLOROPHORM is fatal once in 1,236 times. THE British aristocracy includes 14,000 persons.

In a pack of cards there are 635,013,559,600 different whist hands.

To be perfectly proportioned, a man should weigh 23lbs. for every foot to his height.

In the dominions of the British Empire alone 8,000 individuals vanish every year without leaving any indication as to their whereabouts or ever appearing again.

MATHEMATICAL calculations show that an iron ship weighs 27 per cent. less than a wooden one, and will carry 115 tons of cargo for every 100 tons carried by a wooden ship of the same dimensions.

GEMS.

DRUDGERY is as necessary to call out the treasures of the mind as harrowing and planting those of the earth.

THE weakest living creature, by concentrating his powers on a single object, can accomplish something; the strongest, by dispersing his over many, may fail to accomplish anything.

SILENCE may be golden, or it may be leaden. It may be the silence of wisdom and self-mastery, or it may be the silence of stupidity and cowardice—the silence of the owl or the silence of the sphinx.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BOILED ONIONS.—Peel half a dozen onions, put them in a saucepan of boiling water with a teaspoonful of salt. Boil until tender. Serve with cream sauce.

FRIED CUCUMBERS.—Pare three large cucumbers, slice thick, and soak in salted water for ten minutes. Drain and press out the water. Roll each slice in grated cracker; fry in boiling lard.

CORN GEMS.—Two cups of corn meal, two cups of flour, two cups of sweet milk, two eggs, three heaping teaspoonfuls of baking powder, one-half cup of butter, one-half cup of sugar. Bake in gem tins.

STUFFED CABBAGE.—Take a large fresh cabbage and cut out heart. Fill with stuffing made of cooked chicken or veal chopped very fine and highly seasoned, and rolled into balls with yolks of eggs. Then tie cabbage firmly together, and boil in a covered kettle two hours.

LEMON PIE.—Beat the yolks of two eggs with four teaspoonfuls of sugar, one of butter, one-half cup of cream, and the juice and grated rind of one lemon. Put it into a crust, and bake like a custard pie. When cool beat the whites of the eggs to a froth, add two tablespoonfuls of sugar, spread over the top, and brown it in the oven.

TO REMOVE MILDEW FROM LINEN.—Moisten a tablet of Sunlight Soap and rub well into the marks, cover the soaped parts thickly with finely scraped chalk, press it into the linen and lay it in the sun or in the air, or upon the grass, when nearly dry repeat the process. This must be done three or four times till the mildew comes out.

A BIRD'S NEST is a tempting looking dish for an invalid. Beat the white of an egg until stiff, adding a pinch of salt. Cut a round from a slice of stale bread, using a biscuit cutter; toast it brown and dry, then moisten with a few drops of hot water and a little butter. Spread the beaten white over the toast, make a slight hollow in it and turn in the unbeaten yolk. Set in a moderate oven long enough to set egg and colour slightly.

MISCELLANEOUS.

JEWS are not allowed to buy land in Russia. THE Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse have abandoned their proposed visit to England.

ELEPHANTS in Africa are becoming so scarce that it is proposed to establish protected reservations for them on territory under British protection, like Somaliland.

In the outskirts of the Casbah, or hill suburb of Algiers, there are regular beast farms, where lions and leopards by dozens and pairs are kept for breeding purposes.

THE men and women of the Cree tribe of Indiana dress alike, and can be distinguished only by the ornamentation of their leggings, that of the men being vertical, and that of the women horizontal.

A SINGULAR Korean hat is a great round mat of straw worn by a mourner. The hat is bound down at the sides so as to almost conceal the face and head of the wearer. He carries in his hand a screen or fan, and when in the road if any one approaches him he holds the screen in front of him, so that it, together with the hat, completely conceals him from human gaze.

RATS, mice, and squirrels are continually gnawing at something. They do not do this out of pure mischief, as some people generally imagine, but because they are forced to. Animals of this class, especially rats, have teeth which continue to grow as long as the owner lives. This being the case, the poor creature is obliged to continue his regular gnawing operations in order to keep his teeth ground off to a proper length.

A FRENCHMAN has invented an attachment to the piano with somewhat the effect of a phonograph roller, in that a fine needle records the keys used in producing the chords. It is possible with this invention to catch the ideas that emanate from the brain and flow through the fingers. As there is a great deal of exquisite harmony that goes to waste, the value of this invention is evident.

ARTICLES of dress are now being extensively made of glass. A Venetian manufacturer is turning out bonnets by the thousands, the glass cloth of which they are composed having the same shimmer and brilliancy of colour as silk, and, what is a great advantage, being impervious to water. The spun glass, when soiled, is simply brushed with a hard brush and soap-and-water, and it is none the worse for being either stained or soiled.

THE ordinary carp, if not interfered with, will, it is said, live 500 years. There are now living in the Royal Aquarium, in Russia, several carp that are known to be over 600 years old, and it has been ascertained in a number of cases that whales live to be over 200 years old. A gentleman in London has had an ordinary goldfish for 53 years, and his father informed him that he had purchased it over 40 years before it came into its present owner's possession.

An important discovery has been made, the usefulness of which was shown during the Post Office Jubilee celebration. An instrument was tested which enables any one speaking into a telephone to see his correspondent at the other end, the "image appearing like an animated coloured photograph." The distance covered in the experiments shown was only 30 feet, and it still remains to be seen to what distance light will travel over the wires.

THE plate at Windsor is stated to be of the value of £1,800,000. It includes a gold service, ordered by George IV., which will dine 140 persons, and one of the finest wine-coolers in the world, added to the collection by the same monarch; a shield formed of snuff-boxes worth £9,000, and thirty dozen plates worth £10,000. There is also a variety of pieces brought from abroad and India. The latter include a peacock made of precious stones of every description, worth £80,000, and Tipu's foot-stool, a tiger's head with crystal teeth and a solid ingot of gold for his tongue.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

BREWER.—It will be published shortly.

MALSHOOD.—If you are over age your indentures have expired.

COQUERRE.—Better ask a professional cleaner to undertake the job.

FIREFLY.—Inquire at the Inland Revenue Office, Somerset House.

R. G.—You are liable for the maintenance of both mother and child.

M. B.—A red-hot iron will soften old patty so that it is readily removed.

COUNTRESS.—Try profuse sprinkling with freshly ground white pepper.

TROJAN.—A copy might possibly be obtained at some second-hand bookstore.

TROUBLED MOTHER.—Take him to the Orthopaedic Hospital, Oxford-street, W.

WARY.—You will not injure your skin by inhaling either menthol or camphor.

CATTLEMAKER.—Penny stamp is sufficient in receipt for any amount up to a million.

DOY.—Take them to a respectable dealer and ask him to make an offer for the collection.

O. R.—Ordinary window putty well kneaded and coloured according to requirements.

A. B. C.—Our advice is to stick to your legitimate trade, and give up your leisure to art.

THEODORE.—Theodore is Greek, the gift of God. Several Greek emperors bore this name.

OLD-FASHIONED.—Lettitia was a very common name among the Romans. It means gladness.

WORRIED TENANT.—We suspect that you are responsible for their execution, not the landlord.

FLYAWAY.—You can offer yourself to the captain of a ship in the harbour, or go round owners' offices.

DACIA.—Carolina is the feminine of the Latin form of Charles. Its significance is the noble-spirited one.

FORLORN.—You would take one-third of what is fetched, your children dividing the other two-thirds.

A VILLAGE MAID.—There are dyspepsias that are pronounced harmless, but it is always well to be cautious in employing them.

PATRIOT.—Nelson was a pure-bred Englishman, having been born at Burnham Thorpe, in Norfolk, his father being rector there.

DISTRESS.—Wash your feet nightly with carbolic soap or water containing five or six drops of carbolic acid; this will assist you materially.

ONE OF MANY.—One of the best rules to observe in families is to treat the members thereof with the same courtesy as is shown to outsiders.

RUST.—If an article that has become rusty is soaked in kerosene oil for some time the rust will become loosened and come off very readily.

CLOVER.—The clove is the dried bud of the clove-tree. It is a little flower, gathered while it is green, smoked over a wood fire and dried in the sun.

PATTE.—Wash and rub sweet potatoes, steam until tender; remove the skins, slice, place in a pan, spread with bits of butter, and set in the oven to brown.

ASPIRANT TO FAIR.—Our advice is that you join an amateur dramatic society. If you are very successful you might then consult a respectable theatrical agent.

STAGETRACTOR.—As regards scholarship he stands undoubtedly in the first rank, and he has done more than any living man to lift the dramatic art to its present high level.

E. G.—The Colosseum in Rome could accommodate eighty thousand spectators. It was in the form of an ellipse; its longer diameter, 616 feet; the shorter diameter, 510 feet.

MAQUIN.—We should say your general health is bad, and that you require to see a doctor, who would no doubt prescribe a tonic. It is not beneficial to wash the hair too frequently.

J. A. J.—To make fireproof paper nothing more is necessary than to saturate the paper in a strong solution of alum-water, and when thoroughly dry it will resist the action of flames.

FAY.—It is well to remember when papering a small room that blue in all light shades makes a room look larger. Dark colours or papers with large patterns have the opposite effect.

PAIR JEANETTE.—As your dress is no doubt a coloured one any application to remove the mud would bring the colour with it, and really the only course open to you is to have the dress dyed.

BROKEN-HEARTED.—Pneumonia is a lung disease, and when not attended to upon its first manifestation sometimes runs a rapid course, ending in congestion of the lungs and death of the patient.

VENA.—We are quite certain you will never rid your furniture of the vermin except by having the leather taken off and the whole stuffing renewed; the process may seem costly, but it is necessary in order to save the goods and get any value out of them at all.

BUTTERFLY.—You may apply at the Herald's Office, London, for a license to adopt a new name, which they will grant you on payment of certain fees, and you can then advertise this license in such newspapers as you may think desirable.

NELSON.—You will find some useful information in the pamphlet issued by the Admiralty on the pay, position, and prospects of seamen and boys of the Royal Navy, to be obtained from any post-office in the kingdom.

A SUFFERER.—There are two kinds, proceeding from different causes, and it is necessary that you should consult a medical man, in order that he may ascertain which form of the ailment you are afflicted with and direct the curative process; this consists in special arrangement of diet.

MAQUIN.—Mildew is difficult to remove; the best plan is to damp and soak the spots, then spread powdered oxalic acid (from chemist) upon that, and lay out to bleach; after some hours rinse in cold water, and should stain not be quite removed, renew the process until success is attained.

S. C.—You must rub your chairs clean with glass paper, or wash them with strong soap and soda water so as to get all the old varnish off, then when dry go over them once or twice, according to taste, with mahogany or walnut castle brand spirit varnish, obtainable at any colourmaker's.

MIRANDA.—Have a neat, plain hat or bonnet, well-fitting gloves—not too tight—and be careful that your shoes, collar, or neck-ruff, and all of the minor details of your dress are in good taste. Nowadays the dress—so long as it is a reasonably presentable one—is of less consequence than the accessories.

HER HEART IS FAR AWAY.

I see her walking home from church,
And all alone goes she,
While others walk in twos and threes,
A happy company.

She bears her hymn-book in her hand,
A prayer is in her eyes,
Which seem to look far, far away
Into the western skies.

Oh, maiden with the soft-grey eyes,
What do you see afar?
We only see the grass-green fields,
The hills whose pine trees are.

But she sees more; in fancy sees
A brave lad in the West
Manfully toiling all day long
For her whom he loves best.

While in a quiet Eastern town
Does she in patience bide,
Awaiting his return when he
Shall claim her for his bride.

And now, as she goes home from church,
This pleasant Sabbath day,
She wonders if her lover thinks
Of her so far away.

She wonders when they two at last,
Beginning a new life,
Shall come from church along this way
As husband and as wife.

TOPSY TURVY.—Candling eggs is the one infallible way to test them. This is done in a dark room with a candle, gas or electric light. When the egg is held close to the light if fresh it will appear a pinkish yellow, and if otherwise it will be dotted with opaque spots, or be entirely dark.

SARA.—To cheese eggs, beat up three eggs with two tablespoonfuls of cheese, add pepper and salt, and beat smooth with a tablespoonful of cream. Put one ounce of butter into a saucepan, melt it, then add the egg mixture, and stir over the fire till it sets; pile on rounds of fried toast. Serve on a hot dish with fried parsley around it.

YEO.—Boil one pound of logwood in four quarts of water; add a double handful of walnut shells; boil it up again, take out the logwood chips, add a pint of best vinegar, and it will be fit for use; apply it boiling; the stain will be improved if, when dry, a solution of green copperas, an ounce to a quart of water, is applied hot over the first stain; the materials can all be obtained at a colourman's.

A COWARD.—A clear conviction that no real harm can befall a person when he is doing right, and that no calamity is so great as a failure to do right, is the antidote to unmanly fear. But the strong sense of duty is not to be acquired in a day nor a year. If can, however, be acquired; and that man alone is truly brave who fears more than he fears anything else, to fall short of his duty.

LITTLE HOUSEWIFE.—In making cream or lemon pie where the crust requires to be baked before the filling is put in, an excellent plan is to lay over the paste a piece of strong brown tissue paper, pleating it to fit the pie plate, and coming above the edge. Fill this with flour or meal, and bake until the crust is done. Then the paper and contents may be lifted out. If flour is used, it can be utilised afterwards for thickening sauces and gravies.

LOUIE.—Put two tablespoonfuls of sugar into a small saucepan, and stir it over the fire till it boils, then it will get yellow; keep stirring till it gets very dark brown, almost like treacle. Then remove it from the fire, pour in one small teacup of water, put on the fire and stir till it boils again, and it is ready when the sugar is dissolved.

A COCKNEY.—Do not bathe in the sea until July. A series of observations recently made at Peterhead by the Scottish Meteorological Society every day during a period of four years and nine months show that the summer warmth penetrates the sea very gradually. The sea water attains its maximum warmth only at the end of August. From that time it becomes warmer than the air. The water also cools more slowly than the atmosphere, so that in November the average temperature of the water is six degrees, and in December seven degrees higher than that of the air.

AGNES.—One heaping cup of flour, white wine, one tablespoonful of salad oil, two eggs, grated peel of half a lemon, and some large strawberries. Mix the oil, lemon peel and flour together. Beat in the yolks of the eggs and add enough wine to make this of the consistency of thick cream. At the last moment add the well-beaten whites of the eggs. Remove the stems from the strawberries, and drop them into the batter. Have boiling in a frying-pan lard at least two inches deep. When you are certain that it is boiling drop the mixture by the spoonful into the lard, allowing one strawberry to each fritter. Fry a light gold colour. Remove with a skimmer to brown paper in the open oven and sift sugar over them and serve.

A PLAYGOER.—The word Lyceum means, literally, a place dedicated to Apollo, who was frequently called the Lycian god, or, more commonly, the Lycean, because in Lycia he had a famous temple, wherein he was supposed to pass the winter months. The name Lyceum was assigned to a sacred enclosure in Athens, near the temple of Apollo. This place decorated with fountains, flowers and statues, and provided with covered walks, was the favourite resort of philosophers and their pupils. Here Aristotle and other wise men of Athens strolled, surrounded by noble young men, who listened to their teachings. Hence the word Lyceum is properly given to any place set apart for the instruction of the people by the lights of the age.

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